



LETTY'S SISTER

HELEN SHERMAN GRIFFITH



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"WE HAVE VISITORS"

Letty's Sister

BY HELEN SHERMAN GRIFFITH

AUTHOR OF

"LETTY OF THE CIRCUS"
"LETTY AND THE TWINS"
"LETTY'S NEW HOME"

Illustrated by Frances D. Jones



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Introduction

LETTY GREY, who, during the last few months of her mother's life, exhibited a pair of trick ponies, "Punch" and "Judy" at an amusement park in Philadelphia, under the management of kind-hearted Mr. Goldberg, as told in "Letty of the Circus," afterward traveled with a circus owned by a Mr. Drake, and was having rather a forlorn time of it when she was recognized by the twins, Jane and Christopher Baker, whose lives Letty had saved from a ferocious bear. The twins were visiting their grandparents at Sunnycrest, at which farm Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, an author, was also a visitor. Learning that the circus was to be disbanded, the twins begged their grandmother to take Letty to Sunnycrest to live. There Mrs. Hartwell-Jones became acquainted with Letty, took a great fancy to her and finally adopted her, as one learns in "Letty and the Twins."

"Letty's New Home" tells of the happi-

ness of Letty with her adopted mother, whom she calls Aunt Mary, and of the new friends she makes and the experiences she has in school and out. The Beckwith family, of varying ages and characters, and Mademoiselle La Grange are among the chief of her new friends, and when Letty endeavors to save mademoiselle's life in a fire, she is regarded as quite a heroine. Fortunately, the praise she receives does not spoil her.

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Letty's Sister.

Letty's Sister

CHAPTER I

SUMMER PLANS

MRS. HARTWELL-JONES laid aside the letter she had been reading with a sigh, half of regret, half of excitement, and rang the bell.

"Katy," she said to the maid who answered, "will you please light the fire downstairs? It has grown rather chilly and a fire is always cheerful and pleasant."

Katy agreed that an open wood-fire was most cheerful, and soothin' to the nerves, but she hoped, secretly, that her mistress was not going to be ill, to need the cheering of a fire on such a bright spring day. But Mrs. Hartwell-Jones was nervous and excited, which made her feel shivery and cold, in spite of the bright sunshine. She had come to a decision just then which to her at least

had been most important and difficult to reach, and she was suffering from the nervousness of reaction.

The fire was only just started and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had established herself in front of it with her fancy work, when Letty rushed in, her cheeks glowing with health and exercise.

“Oh, Aunt Mary,” she cried, “how can you stay sitting here over a fire on such a perfectly scrumptious day! I saw three robins in the park on my way home, and I’m sure I heard a bluebird singing, though I couldn’t get a peep at him. Don’t you want to come out for a walk with me before I start lessons? I’ve got plenty of time, and you look tired. Do come, Aunt Mary.”

After the disastrous fire which had destroyed the building in which Miss Sims conducted her school, and in which fire Letty herself had so narrowly escaped death in trying to save the life of her French teacher; after this fire there had been two or three weeks of enforced holiday until another location could be found for the school. Miss Sims had shown great courage and fortitude over her misfor-

tune. Investigation proved that the fire, due to a defective flue, could not have been prevented, nor the blame placed at any one's door, save, possibly, the original builder's. Instead of parents becoming nervous after such an incident, as Miss Sims feared might be the case, and placing their daughters in other schools, everybody united in praising her wonderful management and the splendid success of the fire drill, which had saved the life of every one of the eighty and more children entrusted to her care.

Such results displayed a discipline to be greatly commended, and all of Miss Sims' pupils returned as soon as another suitable building could be procured. The girls settled down into the routine of their school life again, almost as quietly as though nothing had happened. Indeed, no change of any sort was apparent, except that Miss Sims thought that the Easter vacation should be shortened, because of the enforced holiday. She had made her announcement concerning the Easter vacation that very day in school, and while many of the girls were disappointed they nearly all saw the fairness of it.

Letty, who had gone to her music lesson directly from school and so had not been home since early morning, was anxious to discuss this news with her Aunt Mary. But the sight of the tired look about Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's eyes, and the nervous color in her cheeks, put Letty's own concerns out of her mind for the present.

"You look almost as if you had been crying," she exclaimed anxiously, as she bent to kiss the sweet, beautiful face so lovingly upturned to meet hers. "Do come for a little walk—a teeny, weeny one."

"Well, perhaps I shall, presently," agreed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, trying to make her voice as calm as usual. "But I want to tell you something first, Letty dear."

Letty turned and dropped her music roll with a thud.

"You have had bad news!" she cried tremulously, and knelt upon a low stool at Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's side. "Oh, do tell me!"

"On the contrary, it is very good news, child," replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones gently, putting one hand on each glowing cheek and lifting the girl's anxious, eager face so that she

could watch its every change of expression. "Letty, what should you say to a trip to Europe?"

Letty stared at her for several seconds before the real meaning of the words could be grasped.

"A trip to Europe! For whom? Me? Oh; Aunt Mary, you can't really mean it! Oh ——" Then she stopped suddenly. "Do you mean that you are going to send me with the Beckwiths?" she asked soberly. "Because—— Oh, Aunt Mary, please don't. They are dear, every one of them, and I love them dearly, but I shouldn't want to go so far away from you—I shouldn't want to go away from you at all, please. I'd rather be at Hammer-smith with you than go around the world with any one else!"

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's tears were still very near the surface and at this very positive proof of Letty's fondness for her, they broke out afresh.

"Oh, my little girl, my little girl!" she cried, "if only you could know how precious to me is your loyal love! My own, sweet child!"

She clasped Letty to her in a passionate embrace and the two cried together for a few moments from sheer comfort in each other's love and presence. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones quickly recovered her self-control and she began to be very glad that she had made her great resolve.

"But Letty, dear, I didn't mean to send you with the Beckwiths—or with any one but me," she said as soon as she could speak steadily.

Letty had to take in the wonderful news all over again.

"Oh, Aunt Mary, Aunt Mary, Aunt Mary! You and I to go to Europe together! Oh, oh, oh! Could anything more wonderful happen?"

"I ought not to have said Europe," Mrs. Hartwell-Jones amended, "for probably we shall go only to England, Letty dear."

But nothing could check Letty's joy.

"Only England!" she echoed. "'Only'! Oh, the joy of it. England forever! God save the King!"

" 'The splendor falls on castle walls,
And snowy summits old in story ;'

“Oh, Aunt Mary, we must walk—run—fly! There is something inside me that will burst if I don’t move about; a spring—no, a geyser. We are going to England, England, England!”

She sprang to her feet and pirouetted about the room like a fairy sprite. She had never lost the agile grace of her childhood, and the tall, willowy figure bent and swayed around the room like a young elm tree in a summer breeze, as she tripped to and fro in a perfect ecstasy of joy.

“Why, Letty, I never dreamed it would mean so much to you as that!” cried Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, staring at her in some bewilderment. “Have you the wanderlust in your veins?”

“I have something very much more lively than just blood in my veins to-day,” laughed Letty. “What is ‘wanderlust,’ Aunt Mary? Is it anything like Apollonaris water? For that is how my veins feel; all clear and sparkling and bubbly, bubbly, bubbly!”

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones laughed.

“You funny child! All this about a trip to England! What would you have done if I had said China or Japan or India?”

"I don't believe I should have said anything; or very much. They are queer, far-away places, nothing but names on the map. But England, that I've studied about and read about, and where my 'Miss Reese' lives! Oh, Aunt Mary!" And Letty dropped back on her stool again, completely out of breath.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones stroked the soft brown braids, roughened by the recent mad whirl, and the two sat silent for some moments, gazing thoughtfully into the fire. Then Letty looked up.

"Aunt Mary, are you sure you wish to go? Won't it be too hard for you? That long, long voyage across the ocean that you dread! Oh, Aunt Mary, are you doing it just for me? Won't it be too much of a sacrifice?"

"I can't pretend that the voyage will not be hard to endure, Letty mine, but I am ready to bear it. And I am not doing it 'just for you,' if that will be any comfort to your dear, unselfish heart. I am much more selfish than that. Read this," and she handed Letty the letter from her publisher.

"We acknowledge that a great deal has been written about every land known to the geog-

raphers," the letter said, "but it is surprising how little of it has been done for children. With your skill in description you could accomplish a great deal in the way of making both geography and history more interesting to children by weaving them into your stories."

"What fun that will be, Aunt Mary, poking about collecting material for your story. Let us each keep a note-book. May I keep one too? And we'll put down in it anything we see or hear that we think interesting or funny. Of course you wouldn't use any of my notes unless you wanted, but I should so love to try. I'd feel very important to be helping an author with her work, even if it turned out to be the leastest little help in the world."

"You do help me, Letty, all the time, more than you realize. You help me by being always bright and gay, by looking on the cheerful side of life, finding out and keeping before you the best and truest side of things and people, and by your infinite faith and love. You are a wholesome child, Letty, and that is so very much the best influence to give the world."

“Why, Aunt Mary!” exclaimed Letty, opening hereyes wide in astonishment. “Am I really all that?” Then she gave a contented little laugh. “But how could I help being something of that sort—as much of it as there is in me to be—when you have done so much for me! It is you who have made me, Aunt Mary. I should be an ungrateful wretch to be anything else. Why, when I think that less than one single year ago ——”

“Hush!” exclaimed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, putting her arm around the girl and shivering; “don’t let us talk about those dreary times. My only wee little regret about you, childie, is that I could not have had you always—always!”

Another long silence fell between them, and then Mrs. Hartwell-Jones said briskly:

“There are ever and ever so many things to talk over and arrange, and we’d better begin at once. For a starter, there are Emma Haines and Tottie.”

“Oh, that reminds me of what Miss Sims told us in school to-day. I could hardly wait to get home to tell you, and to talk over what we should do about it, and then your

wonderful, wonderful, wonderful news just made me forget everything else in the world. Oh ! ”

“ There, there, don’t get started on that mad dervish exhibition again,” laughed her Aunt Mary, pressing a detaining arm about the girl’s shoulders. “ What did Miss Sims tell you in school to-day ? ”

“ Well, it seemed a very serious and worrisome matter, and I was wondering all the way home what we were going to do about it, but it doesn’t seem to matter now. Life is funny, that way. You think something is just so big and important that it fills up your whole life, and then something else comes along that is ever so much bigger and really important, and pricks the other thing, bing !—like a soap-bubble.

“ It was like that at Hammersmith last year, when Mr. Drake was disbanding his circus and offering Punch and Judy for sale. I thought that nothing could be more dreadful or important and then—suddenly Jane and Kit bobbed up, took me out to Sunnycrest, where I saw you, my own dear, precious Aunt Mary—and presto, as that funny trick

man said at the Settlement party, everything was changed and different in a minute.

“What happy, happy times followed! The jolly summer, all my dear, happy winter at school, and now—this!”

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones listened with fond patience.

“And now, my dear little philosopher,” she said at length, “just what was it Miss Sims told you in school? Has it gone, like a burst soap-bubble, out of your memory?”

Letty laughed gayly.

“What a little prig I must have sounded, with all my moralizing. Why didn’t you punch me, Aunt Mary? Miss Sims said that, as we had lost so much time, she thought we ought not to take off as much time as usual for the Easter vacation. Of course she said it more grammatically than that, without so many ‘times’ and all, but we are going to have for our holiday only from the Thursday before Easter until the Tuesday after.

“It will disappoint Mr. Beckwith awfully, for he had planned such a perfectly wonderful motor trip for those ten days!” And Letty sighed involuntarily. “It will inter-

fere, too, with our plan of taking Tottie up to Mrs. Andrews."

"And worst of all," added Mrs. Hartwell-Jones soberly, "it cuts out the visit we were to make at Hammersmith, en route, on that self-same motor trip, and so prevents our seeing Mr. and Mrs. Parsons. You remember that we engaged our same rooms with them for next summer, and we must let them know as soon as possible about our change of plan, so that they can get other boarders in our place."

"Of course. And dear little Punch and Judy! What will become of them?" exclaimed Letty in dismay.

"All that will have to be talked over and arranged. I thought, perhaps, since Grandfather Baker was so kind about offering to take care of them before, that he would take the ponies for the summer, and let Jane and Christopher drive them. They will be ten this summer, and quite old enough to be trusted."

"How they would love it! And Punch and Judy are so dear and gentle. Janey would take the best of care of them, I know, and not let Kit whip them, or drive too fast."

"As to Tottie," went on Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, "we can take her to Mrs. Andrews by train, and perhaps Mrs. Somers will wish to go with us. For you and I must go to Hammer-smith, Letty, even if it is only for a day, to tell Mr. and Mrs. Parsons our plans. It would seem cold and unkind, just to write that we have changed our minds and shall not need the rooms. Mr. and Mrs. Parsons were much more to us than mere landlord and landlady.

"But hark, I hear Katy coming with the tea tray, and I also hear the front door-bell. We are going to have visitors."

"Oh, Aunt Mary, if it is visitors, may I tell them? Or is the news to be kept a secret?" asked Letty eagerly, her excitement threatening to get the better of her again. "Because, if it's to be a secret, I simply have got to run away. I couldn't see anybody I know and not burst out with the news. Why, I'd have to tell even grave, serious-minded Mr. Shoemaker!"

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones laughed again, in spite of herself.

"It need not be a secret, dear Letty. I bore

all that part of it until I was sure. And I see how wise I was," she added teasingly, "for it is evident that you never could have stood the strain."

"No, I couldn't have," agreed Letty solemnly. "I should have looked it at every one, even if I had succeeded in holding my tongue. Here comes some one. Oh, dear, it was only the postman. How I am dying to tell some one the wonderful news! "

CHAPTER II

GETTING READY

"WELL," exclaimed Emma Haines with a calmness that was forced upon her from sheer powerlessness to express her astonishment, "I always did say you were the luckiest girl in all this world, Letty. The very luckiest, my sakes!

"But I'm lucky too," she added quickly. "Just think of Tottie, and Mrs. Somers findin' her such a nice home until I can earn enough money to keep her. And of me bein' able to start right in earnin' money. 'Tain't much yet, of course, but it's a starter. Oh, Letty, it's goin' to be so nice to make enough money to keep a little home for Tottie and me! Even if it's only two rooms somewhere it'll be our home. We can put the furniture anywhere we like and have what we want for our meals."

"And it will be all your doing, Emma,

think of that!" cried Letty enthusiastically. "All your own work."

"Yes, that will be part of the comfort of it," agreed Emma complacently, trying hard not to be too self-satisfied with this view of the case.

Emma had the instincts of the true wage-earner, the zeal of the faithful worker, the ambition of the maker of an income and the righteous pride of a payer of bills.

"But please tell me more about it all," she said presently, turning the conversation with a wrench away from her own concerns. "When do you sail and how long are you going to be gone?"

"Oh, it's going to be only a short holiday, because of course we shan't go until school closes, and Aunt Mary wants to be back here early in September, for several reasons. It will be really for only three months, you see, and we'd have been away at Hammersmith that long anyway, you know."

"But it seems longer, with you bein' so far away. Will you see Rome and Paris and all those places?" asked Emma, her eyes growing large and wistful.

"Oh, no, we couldn't go to Rome in sum-

mer, you know. It's too hot and fever-y there. And I don't believe we are going out of England at all. It isn't a 'European tour,' as the advertisements call it. We are just going to England to spend the summer instead of to Hammersmith, that's all. But I'm terribly excited about it, just the same."

"Well, I'm glad you're not going right away, 'cause it'll be pretty hard these next few weeks for me, gettin' used to being without Tottie. You know Mrs. Somers has had a letter sayin' Mrs. Andrews'll be ready for her the end of this week."

"So soon? Oh, Emma, Tottie will be so well and happy up there in the country with nothing to do but play out-of-doors all day long in the sunshine! She will get fat and rosy again."

"I know. And I'm to go to see her, Mrs. Somers says, as soon as the Fresh Air children get started goin' there. You know Mrs. Andrews promised Mrs. Somers 't she'd take six or eight children to board, and Mrs. Somers is goin' to send me to look after 'em. Ain't— isn't Mrs. Somers just an angel on earth, Letty?"

“I do think she remembers to do things that nobody else would think about. Most people just give money to help, or get up concerts and all that, but Mrs. Somers goes about finding out what people need help, and what sort of help, and then she gives it, without any fuss.”

“Yes, and in the right way, too. I’d earn my living selling newspapers, rather’n take money from any of them Charities; but I’d let Mrs. Somers do anything for me. She always has a way of makin’ you feel that you can manage to pay her back somehow; if not right at the time, by doin’ something for her, why anyhow, some time.”

Emma was not good at expressing her emotions, but Letty understood.

“Mrs. Somers is goin’ abroad, too,” Emma said at length. “I suppose you’ll see a whole lot of her, over there.”

“We don’t expect to, after the first week or two. They are going to Switzerland and the Austrian Tyrol. But we shall all be together for a week or two, until after her sister Agnes’s wedding in London. And we are to sail on the same boat, you know, the ‘Minerva.’

"Oh, Emma, do you remember the old Front Street days in Philadelphia, when we used to see the people going to the steamers or coming off them, and we used to wonder what it was all like over there, in that great land over the seas!"

"And now you are goin' to know, Letty Grey. But I can know too, in a way, 'cause I can read about them countries. I don't mind reading now, the way I used, since I've learned how so much better, and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones lends me such interestin' books. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones is awful good too, isn't she? I guess, next to Mrs. Somers, she's about the thoughtfulest person I know."

"She is next to no one in the wide, wide world!" cried Letty with fond enthusiasm. "But, Emma, let's don't quarrel about our patron saints, shall we?" she exclaimed, checking her impetuous speech and laughing gayly.

"What is all this talk about patron saints?" demanded Mrs. Hartwell-Jones herself, coming in upon them.

She had dropped Letty at the Settlement House to tell Emma the wonderful news, giving them time to talk it all over satis-

factorily, and she had called for her on the way home from a visit to Madame Henri. The visit had been very satisfactory, and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones was in high spirits. One of the reasons for an early return to New York in the autumn was that Letty was then to begin her singing lessons with Madame Henri. Moreover, that lady had given Mrs. Hartwell-Jones a letter of introduction to a famous singing master abroad who would, she hoped, be persuaded to listen to Letty's voice and pass an opinion upon it.

There was a great deal to do, to get ready for the summer's sojourn, and the bright spring days fairly flew by. The Hammersmith visit was rather melancholy, for poor little Anna Parsons wept and wept, like Rachel of old, and would not be comforted. When she went back to town, Letty told Jane Baker how disappointed Anna was, that she and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones were not to return to Hammersmith for the summer, and Jane wrote Anna a comforting little letter, somewhat untidy, and not as well spelled as it might have been, but quite perfect in Anna Parsons' uncritical eyes.

"DEAR ANNA,"—the letter ran,—“Letty says you are feelin’ bad about her going away but you know Kit and me are coming to Sunnycrest. Anyhow we think we are if Daddy don’t have to go out West and then he’ll take us to see the Yellowstone Park but if we come to Sunnycrest were going to have Punch and Judy to drive and I guess you and me will have to play together an awful lot cause Kit will be sure to want to play baseball and things with Billy and the other boys. Did you get any new dolls for Christmas? I did and we’ll have fun playing with them won’t we.

“Your friend,
“JANE BAKER.”

And so Anna Parsons felt that there was still some joy left in life, especially after Letty sent a most adorable little doll, with a whole tiny wardrobe packed, together with its wearer, in a little wicker trunk, which Letty had bought out of her own pocket money as a consolation present. Fortunately Anna did not know that the “if” in Jane’s letter was so big that it grew into a certainty, and Jane and Christopher did not go to Sunnycrest, after all.

"It is nice to be missed, Aunt Mary," Letty confided to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones when she was buying the present, "although I'm awfully sorry for the one who does the missing, because it hurts so."

But there was not much time either for missing absent friends, or for seeing a great deal of those who were present, for the spring examinations were at hand and also all sorts of "last day" exercises were being planned and prepared for at school. Mademoiselle had drilled Jane Baker's class in a series of quaint, old-time French ballads, which they were to act out with appropriate singing. Letty had consented to swell the childish chorus by singing behind the scene, while Seth Beckwith accompanied on his violin.

The witnessing of a rehearsal for this affair gave Mary Beckwith an idea for the entertainment which the W. S. B.'s gave every spring for the benefit of the Fresh Air Fund. They had been in a great quandary as to what form of entertainment to give this summer.

"After our brilliant feat of originality with the bazaar, last winter, we daren't attempt

anything that has been done before, for fear of losing our reputation," said Clara Markham at one of the many anxious meetings of the committee on entertainments. "But for the life of me, I can't think of a single new thing. The court scene from 'The Merchant of Venice' is as far as my mind consents to carry me, and that has been done ever since amateur theatricals were invented."

"Yes, and done to death, too. Poor 'Quality of mercy.' I wonder how a composition of beautiful language feels to have itself murdered at frequent intervals," laughed Letty.

"Will all of you keep quiet for just a single minute, please?" called Mary Beckwith, who had tried several times to make herself heard. "I have an idea!"

"Sensation! Tableau! Grand scenic effects with red lights! Mary has an idea!" cried Clara gayly. "Mary, allow me to surrender to you the chair, for you possess that priceless thing which I have not."

"It is only this," said Mary modestly, when the fun and laughter had subsided; "why don't we give a pantomime?"

"A pantomime? You mean 'Humpty Dumpty,' like the Hanlon Brothers give?" asked one of the girls curiously.

"With Columbine, Harlequin and all the rest?" added another. "But that sort of thing needs trap-doors, sleight-of-hand people and all sorts of tricks and contrivances."

"Of course I don't mean that! If only you would wait until I have finished telling," groaned Mary. "I got the idea from watching the children doing their French songs. They go through it all so seriously, and some of their gestures are so comical that I wondered if it wouldn't be funny to see some serious poem taken off by illustrations in pantomime."

"For instance?" asked Clara Markham, beginning to see the possibilities of the suggestion.

"Well, there's Tennyson's 'Lady Clare.' That is the only one I have thought of, so far, but I know you girls could think of lots more of that kind, dramatic and rather sentimental. This is my plan," she went on hastily, anxious to have her say out with no more interruptions, "to have a sheet stretched

across the front of the stage and the lights arranged just right, so as to cast strong shadows. Then have some one recite the poem in front of the curtain, standing at one side, of course, so as not to block the view of the sheet, then at proper intervals have people behind the sheet make absurdly exaggerated gestures, so that their shadows, only, appear on the screen, to illustrate the poem. Do you understand what I mean?"

Mary's plan was greeted with enthusiastic applause, and the energetic committee set about carrying it out at once. They secured the help of the English teacher, in selecting those poems that would produce the most comical effect in the parodying show illustrations, and Letty and Clara Markham were chosen as the two speakers, they having the best voices and the quickest memories for learning by heart.

Letty found every second of her days occupied, and generally rehearsed the pieces she was to recite at the most unexpected times and in the most unexpected places. Katy, the housemaid, was startled one morning by hearing a voice proclaiming from the

bath-room, to the accompaniment of vigorous splashing :

“ ‘ Are you out of your mind, my nurse, my nurse ! ’ ” and felt somewhat concerned for the state of Letty’s mind until the situation was explained to her and she got used to such outbursts.

Walking to and from school was another excellent time for repeating her verses, but it was also an excellent time for dreaming golden dreams about the wonderful summer ahead of her, and Letty frequently found herself jumbling Lady Macbeth’s speech with eager speculations as to the real appearance of Westminster Abbey.

“ When we were learning our parts for the French play, mademoiselle told us that we ought to know the words so perfectly that we could think about other things and yet go on repeating the sentences with as much expression as if our souls were in them. And it’s lucky for me now that I’ve had that training, for I never should be able to recite all those dramatic things if they were going to keep my mind off England,” she confided to her Aunt Mary.

"I hope you have not attempted too much," replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones anxiously; "you learn so easily that it is not a severe strain, is it, dear?"

"Not the least bit of a strain," laughed Letty. "Why, I think if I had two voices I could say 'The Wooing of Henry V' and 'Lady Clare' at the same time. I got used to learning things by heart, back in the old days when girls lent me their story books at school and I wanted to remember the stories after the books were given back. Don't you remember how I told Kit and Janey the story of 'Thistledown' at Sunnycrest, almost word for word? Oh, Aunt Mary, don't worry about me. Surely there is not much mental strain about being the happiest, happiest girl in the whole, wide, wide world, is there?"

"And Aunt Mary, what do you think mademoiselle told me to-day? She says she is going abroad for the summer, too, to spend the vacation in her own old home. She has been giving private lessons this spring and has saved enough to go. She is so pleased and excited about it, that she cried when she told me. It makes me happier than ever to

know that other people are having what they want. I only hope Anna Parsons isn't feeling too bad," she added regretfully.

"She and Janey Baker will have beautiful times together," replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones cheerily. "They are just the same age and both devoted to dollies, so they will have many happy games together while Kit, as Jane says, is off playing with the boys. And how is Emma bearing up under Tottie's absence?"

"She's a little blue, but too busy to grieve much," answered Letty. "Tottie does send the funniest little post-cards, all in big printing with the most dreadful spelling. Mrs. Somers gave her a whole package of colored picture post-cards and asked Mrs. Andrews to see that Tottie sends one off regularly twice a week. Mrs. Somers thought Tottie would be more sure to write regularly if she had the colored cards to write on, but Tottie gets so interested in the pictures on them that she always prints remarks about them instead of saying how she is or if she is happy. But Mrs. Andrews most always tucks a little sentence up at the top of the card to say that Tottie is well and good and has a good appe-

tite. As I should think she might well have, for Mrs. Andrews is a splendid cook. I have never forgotten those doughnuts.

“And now, Aunt Mary, are you frightfully busy, or can you spare time to hear me recite ‘King Henry’s Wooing’? I am not awfully sure of some of Katherine’s replies. By the way, I embarrassed Katy so the other day at luncheon,” she added laughing. “You were out, and I was having my lunch alone. Katy passed me the baked potatoes and I looked up and said ardently: ‘Do you like me, Kate?’

“She nearly dropped the vegetable dish, she was so surprised, but she answered heartily: ‘Sure an’ I do, Miss Letty, even when you teases, miss.’ Well, I had been saying French Katherine’s reply in my mind: ‘I cannot tell what is like me,’ so I went on with Henry’s part out loud: ‘An angel is like you, Kate, and you are like an angel.’ ‘Well, if that ain’t the beatinest!’ exclaimed Katy. ‘I’ll just run out to the kitchen an’ see if Bridget has something you like for dessert.’ Now, Aunt Mary, I’m ready to begin when we’ve both stopped laughing.”

CHAPTER III

THE NEW TRUNK

“LETTY,” said Mrs. Hartwell-Jones one afternoon when preparations for departure had already reached the stage of packing, “I am going to buy you a new trunk.”

“Oh, Aunt Mary, not really! I never had a trunk of my own, in my life. But there seem to be plenty of trunks up in the storeroom,” she added hesitatingly. “Won’t it be extravagant to get another?”

“No, I think it will be less extravagant in the end to buy a new one; they are not very expensive, and we can economize on the energy and patience it would take to unpack one of those in the storeroom. They are all filled with odds and ends, some of value, but mostly of sentimental relics that I really haven’t the courage to go over. Suppose we go down-town this very afternoon and get the deed over with. Then the trunk can be marked

and sent home in time to begin your packing on Saturday morning."

With all the willingness in the world, Letty ran to get her hat, jacket and gloves. She was ready long before the taxi-cab, which Katy had ordered by telephone, was at the door, and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones teased her.

"One would think you were on your way to buy a pearl necklace, at the very least," she said, "instead of just a trunk."

"Just a trunk! Why, Aunt Mary, I'd a heap rather have 'just a trunk,' with my very own initials on it, than the handsomest necklace in New York. Because a necklace I'd just have to lock away in the bank until I'd be grown up, but in every railway station we get out of in England I shall have the thrill of seeing that trunk with the letters 'L. G.' on it, so that everybody can read them and know that it's mine, the great traveler, Letty Grey!"

A dapper little man, with gray hair, gray eyes, gray beard and gray clothes, bustled forward to meet them as Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and Letty entered the big shop, and while Mrs. Hartwell-Jones made known her errand,

Letty stared about her in delight. It was a fascinating shop. On each side the walls were piled ceiling high with valises, dress-suit cases and traveling bags of every known and unknown variety, while in long, glass-topped counters were displayed pocketbooks, shopping bags, bottle cases—almost everything indeed that was ever made out of leather, except shoes and harness.

A delicate, pungent odor of Russia leather was in the air ; many people were purchasing articles of travel, and the tone of the shop suggested that the whole world was preparing to start off on a long, delightful, perpetual journey, requiring all sorts of bags and boxes. There were leather boxes for men's silk hats, leather cases for golf clubs, for traveling rugs, for canes and umbrellas ; smaller cases for brushes, collars, studs, neckties—everything that a man might need or fancy he needed.

“I should think that a girl with brothers could come to a place like this and find something different to give them for Christmas every year for almost fifty years,” she reflected. “I didn't know that leather could be used in so many thousand different ways. I wish I

could buy that lovely magazine cover for Aunt Mary," and she hung over a case filled with fancy articles of embossed Russia leather.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones called her just then, and Letty followed her Aunt Mary and the little gray man to the back of the shop. The real business of the day was about to begin.

"You wish a trunk for a young lady, I understand?" the proprietor said, rubbing his gray chin thoughtfully. "Yes, yes; how would this one do? Smith," to a porter, "please get down No. 843. No, no, the third one to the left. That is it. The bridal box, most convenient all-round trunk we have in stock, madam, for the price."

Letty giggled.

"I am afraid that one is rather large," Mrs. Hartwell-Jones said gravely. "Let me see something else, please. How about that brown one, there, standing against the wall?"

"Ah, an excellent trunk, ma'am, excellent. Pull it forward, Smith. It is particularly designed for the summer hotel, because it will open without being pulled out from against the wall. Open it, Smith. And so, you see, it takes up comparatively little room."

"That is certainly an advantage. Is it built strongly enough for traveling?"

"Ah, you expect to travel extensively? Then I should recommend a trunk of a little stronger build, just a little stronger. But not too heavy, you understand. Smith, get down 214, there on the left, fourth row. Right you are. A very nobby little trunk, ma'am. Good and strong and not too heavy. Will stand any amount of handling. You get a trunk too heavy, ma'am, and the porters won't have no patience with it; they throw it around like they had a personal grudge against it. But this little trunk here, ma'am, is light and strong, with doubly enforced corners and remarkably roomy for its size. Open the trunk, Smith. Remarkably roomy."

Letty was growing bewildered. She had no idea that there would be so many different styles and shapes and sizes to choose from, and each trunk that was shown appeared, both from the praises of the shopkeeper and its own merits, to be the very trunk of all trunks for Letty's purposes.

But Mrs. Hartwell-Jones considered the matter quickly and practically, quite unin-

fluenced, to Letty's secret surprise and admiration, by the shopkeeper's comments, and soon made her decision. Then came the question of marking.

"I wish a band of blue; here is the shade," she explained, producing a small oblong off the sample card of a painter's collection of colors—"a band of blue about four and a half inches wide, painted on each end of the trunk, extending from top to bottom. That," she said aside to the curious Letty, "is to help us identify our trunks easily and quickly in the Customs House."

"You don't need a steamer trunk, by any chance?" put in the businesslike proprietor of the shop. "Yes, I understand. And the letters are to be painted on the band of blue. The initials are ——?"

"'L. G.,'" replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, slowly and distinctly, and Letty glowed with importance.

While the details of the purchase were being settled, Letty pursued her inspection of the trunks piled high about her, and wove little stories about the different journeys they might be destined to take, when suddenly her

attention was attracted by the sound of a voice in the front of the shop which sounded oddly familiar to her ears and yet which, at the moment, she could not place. She moved forward curiously and caught sight of the figure of a very stout woman seated somewhat precariously on a stool in front of the counter. The stool was so small and round, and slippery, and the good woman's figure so rotundly bulky that it was really quite a feat of balancing to keep herself thereon.

"What I want," she was telling the salesman, "is something a little gayer than these; something real stylish and cheerful. You know what I mean; figures of red roses with green leaves kind of painted on the leather."

Letty sped forward, moved by a breathless, uncontrollable impulse.

"Mrs. Goldberg!" she ejaculated, rushing upon the stout, voluble lady like an unexpected little breeze. The stout lady, overcome with astonishment, very nearly lost her balance entirely and saved herself from falling only by rising, with instinctive self-preservation, to her feet.

"It isn't ——!" she gasped. "It surely isn't Letty Grey!"

"It surely is," laughed Letty, holding out one slim, gloved hand. "I am glad to see you again, Mrs. Goldberg."

"Well, I declare, I declare," panted the excited Mrs. Goldberg, rendered almost speechless by her pleasure and excitement. "I declare I am just—just ——" And words failing her, she kissed Letty heartily and resoundingly on the cheek. "Aaron, Aaron," she called shrilly, "just you come and see who's here. There, don't say a word, child," she added in a hoarse aside. "I want to see if Aaron will know you. My sakes, but you've got tall and rosy and pretty. And so elegant, too!"

Letty grew rosier and prettier than ever under her eager, admiring gaze and was about to speak when a small, dark man, dressed in an immaculate black coat, gray trousers, very shiny silk hat and a very, very large diamond in his glossy shirt-front, interrupted his inspection of big square theatrical trunks, and hurried across the shop to join them. He recognized Letty at once and was quite as glad

to see her as his wife had been. He asked a great many questions, which Letty answered eagerly, and in a very few moments the history of the past four years, since the historic summer when Letty had driven Punch and Judy, the trick ponies, at Willow Grove, a Philadelphia amusement park, under Mr. Goldberg's management, was made clear.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones concluded her business hurriedly, and hastened to the front of the shop to see who could be Letty's odd friends. When they were introduced she was as cordial as possible, for she recollected all that Letty had told her of the couple's kindness to her and her mother.

"When did you come back from California?" asked Letty interestedly. "And oh, Mrs. Goldberg, how is Poll? The dear, funny, clever old parrot!"

Mrs. Goldberg shook her head and heaved a prodigious sigh.

"Poor old Poll is no more," she sighed. "He had a fight with a lion and the shock was too much for his nerves. The poor bird went off in a fit."

"A fight with a lion!" cried Letty, unable

to believe her ears. "How in the world did it happen?"

"Well, it was like this," answered Mrs. Goldberg with a sniff, for she had not got over grieving for her departed pet; "one of the members of Aaron's company was a lion tamer and she had a lion cub that she made a pet of; just like a pussy-cat that little thing was."

"How adorable! I wish I could have seen it," sighed Letty.

"It was real cute, I must say. Miss Roberts, she used to carry it all around in her arms till it got too big. Well, one day she brought it into my room in the hotel where we were staying and Poll acted terribly jealous from the first minute it appeared. He was out of his cage, on a perch I had bought for him, and he squawked and behaved pretty awful for a few minutes till I threatened him with the cover. He never forgot that, Letty. Well, he was so quiet after that that we kind of forgot about him. Then the lion cub got a little restless and I gave him a saucer of milk—same as I would have done with a pussy-cat.

“There was a saucer down on the hearth that I sometimes fed Poll out of, and I just poured the milk into that, without thinkin’, and the baby lion—he was an awful little, undersized thing, and didn’t live long anyhow ; it wasn’t a natural life for him—well, he began to lap up the milk, pussy-cat fashion, and Miss Roberts and me were watchin’ and smiling at his cute ways when all of a sudden there was the most awful squawking and squealing you ever heard in your life, and Poll came flying across the room, just a mess of noisy, ruffled up green feathers. My sakes, I never knew before that a parrot could really fly. And it didn’t look a bit like my Poll. I actually had to look over at the perch and then into the cage, to make sure they were really empty, before I could believe it was Poll, he looked so fierce and hateful and mad. Mad ! My sakes, that bird was mad ! He settled down on that poor, scared little cub’s head and began trying to peck his eyes out.

“The lion gave a yelp, or a miew, or whatever noise it is that baby lions make, and ran for Miss Roberts. Miss Roberts, she ran for the lion and I ran for Poll. We had a time

separatin' 'em, I can tell you. And Miss Roberts carried the poor, scared little lion off to her own room, blaming me for the whole thing, and calling Poll quite horrid names. Poor Poll, he was too old to stand such severe exercise and excitement, and he died soon after."

Mrs. Goldberg wiped away a genuine tear as she finished her little tale, at sight of which Letty restrained her laughter with difficulty, and expressed great sorrow over the parrot's untimely end.

"He was a wonderful bird; he was really," Mrs. Goldberg declared, turning to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, and she plunged into a flood of tender reminiscences.

"Well, well, well," said Mr. Goldberg to Letty. He had been waiting his turn to speak patiently. "It's right glad I am to see you again, and so well and stylish. I heard something of what had happened to you from Mr. Drake."

"Oh, you have seen the Drakes again? How and where are they?"

"They were wintering in Chicago when we saw them on our way East, nearly two months

ago. I guess they're out on the road again by now. Do you know, when I asked for you, Miss Letty, I kind of had you in the back of my mind for a place I need a clever young lady to fill."

His eyes twinkled with amusement at the contrast Letty's present life presented to her circumstances as he had pictured them before he met Mr. and Mrs. Drake. Letty laughed too, and said :

"I am afraid I can't take the position, Mr. Goldberg, but I'm awfully much obliged to you for thinking about me. What was it you had in mind for me to do? Tumble again, or drive other trick ponies?"

"Oh, neither, bless your heart. I kind of guessed you'd have outgrown that sort of thing. I wanted you for my assistant in the business. It's this way," he explained in answer to Letty's puzzled glance. "I've leased a small theater here in New York. I don't take it on till fall, but when I do take hold I guess there'll be a good deal of business in the way of circulars, writing letters and all that. And it struck me how pleasant it would be, if I could work it out, to have a

cheerful, bright young lady who'd sort of take an interest in the business, d' you see, and be willing to do things more or less the way I wanted 'em done, instead of one of these high and mighty young lady typewriters that one hires here in New York, as much for show, it strikes me, as for any real work they ever do.

"Well, and thinks I to myself, Miss Letty Grey's a mighty clever young lady, and one who was always fond of reading and all that and it may be she'd like to fill the position, with a little qualifyin', d' you see. I remembers that that very good lady, your mother, Miss Letty, never did take much shine to your actin' and such, and I thinks to myself that if you was still with the Drakes, or they knew where you was, that mebbe you'd like to come to spend the summer with us somewheres, and take a bit of a course in shorthand and typewritin' and that. And then in the fall we could set up a pretty good little business proposition. My wife she quite looked forward to havin' you this summer—she was never done talkin' about you, out there in California. But of course you're a grand lady now, and don't need to think of business," he ended

with a regretful sigh. "But it's very glad I am to see you so, believe me, Miss Letty."

"Thank you, Mr. Goldberg, with all my heart," cried Letty warmly. She had been scarcely able to control her feelings during Mr. Goldberg's long speech. "I am a very happy, lucky little girl, and don't have to think any more about earning my own living. But oh, I know the very, very, very person for you, Mr. Goldberg. Oh, it does seem to be too good to be true! But if only it could happen!" she exclaimed excitedly, clasping her hands tight in her eagerness.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones turned and eyed the shining eyes and burning cheeks in astonishment and some anxiety.

"My dear child, what is it? What has happened to get you so excited?" she asked.

"Which is what I want to know," repeated Mr. Goldberg, curiously, and he repeated to Mrs. Goldberg the ideas he had entertained for turning Letty into a business woman.

"For my wife and I took a great shine to the little lady," he added, "and we always had it in mind to do something for her if we ever came back East."

"Why, don't you see," burst out Letty, "that it's the very thing for Emma Haines? You remember Emma, Mrs. Goldberg," she added quickly, turning to that lady. "We had a picnic at Willow Grove for which you sent the deliciousest things to eat, and Mr. Goldberg gave Emma and her family tickets to the show, and Emma stayed all night with me afterward."

"Of course I remember; so does Aaron," ejaculated Mrs. Goldberg. "It was the day the trained bear got loose."

"Exactly. Well, Emma's mother married again and went out West, and Emma is studying to earn a living for herself and her little sister Tottie. Emma has been working hard all winter at the Settlement House, Mr. Goldberg, and I know she'd be the very person you want. She's got a very good business head, hasn't she, Aunt Mary? And it would be such a comfort to know she was working for some one who would be kind to her, and take an interest in her. Oh, do promise you'll engage her, Mr. Goldberg."

Letty stopped speaking from sheer breathlessness, and they all laughed at her eager de-

sire to settle Emma's fortune in this rapid, complete way. But the proposition did strike Mr. Goldberg's business sense as being well worth looking into, and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones approved, remembering Letty's accounts in the past of the gentle kindness of this homely, uncultivated but good-hearted couple.

So, as nothing need be settled until their return in the fall, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones gave Mr. Goldberg her card, and also the addresses of both Mrs. Somers and Emma, the latter at the Settlement House, and Mr. Goldberg promised to look into the matter and consider it very seriously.

"I know you would never be sorry, if you engage Emma," said Letty as they all separated at the shop door, "and Mrs. Goldberg would just love Tottie, I'm sure."

Mrs. Goldberg's fat old face lighted up.

"If she's a cunning little girl, and pretty, I certainly should love her," she exclaimed heartily. "I get real lonesome sometimes when Aaron's busy and I haven't anybody to talk to. And it's worse since Poll died," she added mournfully.

"Well, when I come home in the fall I

shall try to come to see you often," promised Letty, "and help you to feel more cheerful. Perhaps, too, you'll get another parrot. But you'd enjoy having Tottie come to see you, I know, for she's both pretty and good. That is, if Mrs. Andrews doesn't keep her in the country," she added. "Good-bye, Mrs. Goldberg, until September."

She waved her hand out of the cab window as they drove off.

"Oh, Aunt Mary," she exclaimed with a little sigh of content, "wasn't it lucky that we chose to-day to buy my new trunk?"

CHAPTER IV

ALL ABOARD

SUCH indescribable, delightful bustle and confusion! Porters running this way and that, with luggage or in search of it; cabmen shouting and calling to their horses; the horses mingling in a familiar way with pedestrians on the crowded wharf; officials beckoning and gesticulating; and everywhere people, luggage and packages innumerable. There were fussy fathers of families trying to keep their flocks together and at the same time keep an anxious eye on the baggage; there were flustered old ladies who had kept an eye on nothing and knew where no one and nothing were; there were flurried young girls in charge of a flurried chaperone, who was endeavoring personally to conduct them and finding her work most difficult at the very beginning. There were old-time holiday makers who crossed regularly every season,

calm and composed, and there were first voyagers who were nervous and depressed. And most numerous of all were the host and hosts of people, jolly and tearful, melancholy and cheerful, who had come down to see other people off.

Letty's heart thrilled and palpitated with the thought that she was a part of it all. Now and then a lump rose in her throat as she looked about her with shining eyes, but it was excitement, not sorrow. She could not feel regret, even when Emma Haines gave way entirely and burying her face on Letty's shoulder, sobbed out unrestrainedly all the loneliness that had been pent up and gathering force ever since Tottie's departure to the country.

"Oh, Letty, Letty, I'm a selfish pig, I know, to care about your goin', when you're so happy, but it does seem dreadful to me. Seein' so many trunks an' all makes me think how awful far away you are goin', an', Letty, dreadful things happen at sea, you know. Oh, dear, oh, dear!" And she sobbed harder than ever.

"Hush, oh, do hush, Emma!" cried Letty,

in great distress lest Mrs. Hartwell-Jones should hear her friend's mournful apprehensions. "You mustn't feel so bad, you know. It isn't going to be for so very long, and you are to be very busy. The time always just flies by when any one is busy. And then you'll be going to Tottie in another few weeks."

"I know," sighed Emma, drying her eyes. "There, I feel some better since I've had a good cry. But, Letty, you'll write often, won't you, and tell me all about everything?"

"Indeed I shall. I'll send a picture postcard from every new place we stop at and you must put them in the book I gave you, each one with the date. Then I'll write a sort of journal letter and send it off about every two weeks or maybe oftener. That will be better than writing lots of short little notes.

"And oh, Emma, please work hard all summer at your shorthand and the rest, because if Mr. Goldberg should take you in the fall, it would be a splendid chance for you. He is so generous and wouldn't make you work too hard, I know. Why, there they are

now! How kind of them to come all the way down here to see us off!"

Letty ran to the gangplank to welcome the two stout, beaming figures, most resplendently clothed and with two pairs of arms replete with bundles. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and Mrs. Somers were found and the latter introduced. Mrs. Somers, with an eye to Emma's future, took Mr. Goldberg aside at once for a confidential business talk, and Mrs. Goldberg proceeded to heap her burden and her husband's into Letty's outstretched, inadequate arms. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones received the surplus, laughing and protesting.

"There," said Mrs. Goldberg with supreme satisfaction, as she deposited the last parcel. "I tried to remember all the different kinds of sweeties you used to like, Letty. I don't believe I've forgotten any, and I added a few of my own favorites. Sea air does make a body tremendously hungry, and it is a comfort to have a bit of some tasty thing hard by to nibble at. The box of candy is from Aaron," she added.

"Ah, don't I remember Mr. Goldberg's boxes of candy!" cried Letty eagerly. "So

big and so good. They haven't grown any smaller, either," she laughed, lifting the heavy square package tied with gorgeous yellow ribbon.

"Yes, and I remember how she saved a box once, for ten whole days," remarked Mrs. Goldberg aside to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, "just so's she could share it with her little friend. That was Letty to the life. A thoughtfuller child I've never seen. Ah, the comfort her and her mother was to me all that time I was laid up with a broken leg! My sakes, I'll never forget it, nor neither will Aaron. And, ma'am, I can't tell you how thankful I am you are making life what it should be for the precious child. Dearie me, my heart aches yet at the memory of that time I went to see her, just after her sweet mother died. The Drakes was almost strangers to Letty then, and her big brother was too busy to see much of her. And there was me, goin' away off to California, clear to the other side of the country an' leavin' her comfortless. I just felt as if I had to take that poor, motherless child and—and mother her!"

Mrs. Goldberg sobbed frankly at the recol-

lection, and wiped her eyes with a strongly-scented handkerchief, edged with wide imitation lace. A tear spotted the pale green satin enfolding her ample bosom, and another twinkled on the large diamond brooch at her throat. But Mrs. Hartwell-Jones forgot the imitation lace, the ugly clothes and inappropriate jewels; she saw only the kind, motherly heart within and understood.

"Dear Mrs. Goldberg," she said softly, "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all that you have felt for, and been to, my Letty. And when we return in the fall I shall hope for a chance to thank you again."

Just then the three Somers children, frantically pursued by a clucking hen or a nurse, came cavorting down the crowded deck, dodging collisions with a most astonishing dexterity and shouting:

"Grandfather and grandmother have come, and Uncle Jack and Mary and Seth; and Alex and Max say where in thunder is everybody 'cause the gong'll ring in a jiffy and they want to say good-bye."

Nothing was very clear to Letty for the next ten or fifteen minutes. Every one was talking

to every one else at the same time, presents and thanks were exchanged hurriedly, hands were shaken, pocket-handkerchiefs got out and put away again, forgotten messages delivered and immediately forgotten again, and in the midst of it all a steward appeared on the deck sounding a most ear-splitting gong, which means "All ashore."

The good-byes and the messages and the excitement redoubled for another few minutes, when a second peremptory clanging of the gong, accompanied by an impossible-to-be-ignored blast upon the huge steamer's huge bass whistle, turned the tide of well-wishers off across the gangplanks to the dock again, where they mingled with the crowds already massed there. Handkerchiefs were waved, or applied in many cases surreptitiously to reddened eyelids; last words and jests were shouted back and forth, and the commotion was as great as ever.

Letty stood immovable, eager, speechless, pressed against the rail. In spite of so many people having left the ship it seemed as crowded as ever, because all the passengers were gathered on the side next the dock, each

eager for a last glance and word from some loved one left behind.

At the last moment Jane and Christopher Baker appeared on the dock, accompanied by their heated and worried-looking father. Christopher was arguing so hotly about the unreasonableness of a trolley car to get blocked at such a critical time, that he almost forgot to wave his hat, but Jane burst into a flood of tears when she realized that she was really too late to kiss Letty good-bye. Mr. Baker prevailed upon a belated steward to carry two bulky, rather grimy packages to Letty, and when the twins found that they could hear Letty's voice and make their own heard by her in turn, they became consoled and shouted gleefully and lustily until the last gangplank was withdrawn.

There was a pause, almost a hush, upon the great crowd as the final preparations were made—a pause which was broken unexpectedly by the sudden tramp of hoofs, a wild shouting somewhere in the background, and a rattle-trap of a wagon, drawn by a rickety white horse, careened into view. An old Irishman, a pipe between his anxiously puckered

lips and his pick and shovel protruding from a sack slung across his shoulders, clambered out of the wagon and accosted a policeman. There was a short, impatient colloquy, a moment's delay, a shouted order or two from the dock to the ship and back, then from the lower deck of the steamer a rope ladder was let down. Up this ladder the old Irishman solemnly climbed, amid a hilarious hubbub of shouting and cheers from the bystanders.

This amusing incident helped to break the tension of impending separation. People who had cried before now laughed heartily; on board the steamer the band began playing a cheerful tune and the big ship swung slowly out into the stream, to the accompaniment of gay laughter and hearty applause.

"Oh!" exclaimed Letty, turning and gazing up into the eyes of Mr. Jack Beckwith, who was standing beside her, "isn't it thrilling!"

"It is indeed, little Miss Grey," he answered gravely. "And how do you feel, now that you are really and truly off?"

"Well, I don't know yet," replied Letty truthfully. "Of course I'm the gladdest of

the glad, but to see all those people here, waving and shouting and being left behind, getting farther and farther away each minute, why, it gives me just a little queer feeling. I am glad the old Irishman came at just the time and in the funny way he did," she added, laughing at the recollection. "It took everybody's mind off. Poor old soul, I suppose he was completely scared to death for fear he'd miss the ship. Perhaps his family were on board, waiting for him. Mr. Beckwith, you have crossed the ocean a great many times; is it always like this? I mean, the start-off?"

"There are always the good-byes, and the feeling that you've left the most important part of your wardrobe or your purse behind; but you soon get used to it."

And Letty did, sooner than she ever could have believed possible. Almost at once she settled down naturally into the indolent, charming routine of life at sea. There was a chair filled with rugs and cushions beside her Aunt Mary, if she chose to be lazy, but there were also walks to take with Mary Beckwith, shuffleboard to play, and Mrs. Somers' children to help keep out of mischief.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and Mrs. Somers were good enough sailors, but they preferred to sit quietly, warmly wrapped, in their deck chairs, talking together or reading, and being served most of their meals by the deck steward. Mrs. Beckwith took to her bed for several days, but her husband was a hale and hearty seaman ; he liked to tramp the deck for hours at a stretch and Letty liked to walk beside him and listen to his stirring tales of experiences in the early days of sea voyaging. He remembered some of the early steamboats, and his father had told him many of his own experiences, some exciting, some amusing. Letty was most interested to hear that Mary's grandfather had once crossed in the same boat, packet-boats they called them then, with Mr. Charles Dickens, on the voyage Mr. Dickens described so humorously in his "American Notes," which book Letty found among a number of well-thumbed volumes in the ship's library and read with infinite amusement.

Letty was supremely happy. She literally never had time to be seasick, and indeed, the weather for the first half of the voyage was

too perfect to allow any but the most chronic invalids to feel more than a slight discomfort. The "Minerva" was one of a slower line of boats, and on the afternoon of the fourth day, the passengers were granted the thrill of perceiving through field-glasses the four funnels of one of the biggest, celebrated "ocean greyhounds," as she sped across the vision and melted into the vast horizon during an incredibly short space of time.

Letty felt rather solemn as she tucked herself into her berth that night.

"I am beginning to realize that the ocean is a pretty big place, after all," she reflected whimsically, and she lay awake for longer than usual, listening to the steady, droning throb of the powerful engines.

CHAPTER V

A MESSAGE BY WIRELESS

LETTY turned over in her berth, suddenly wide awake. What had roused her? She could not tell; but something was different—what was it? Gradually she took in the fact that a complete and deadly stillness reigned. What did the stillness mean? Then, as her startled mind grew more awake and alert, she realized what had happened. The steamer had stopped. The great engines were no longer throbbing out their rhythmic song of power and the big ship lay inert and motionless, save as she was swung lazily back and forth in the trough of the sea.

“Letty, Letty,” called Mrs. Hartwell-Jones in tones of anxiety from the lower berth, “are you awake, child? Jump up and dress, quickly. I am afraid something has happened.”

Letty sprang out of bed and felt for her

clothes. Her teeth chattered and she was trembling all over, but it was more from excitement than cold or fear.

"What do you suppose it can be, Aunt Mary?" she whispered. "I don't believe we have bumped into anything, do you?"

"Oh, no, no, not that, I trust!" cried Mrs. Hartwell-Jones in a tone of anguish. "I pray I may not have to live through another such experience!"

"Oh, Aunt Mary, Aunt Mary, I forgot! How dreadful this is for you!" cried Letty, springing across the narrow room and embracing the nervous, sobbing woman who sat on the edge of the sofa, her face buried in her hands.

After a few soothing words, Letty had the presence of mind to switch on the electric light, and the brightness calmed them both somewhat. Just then the chug, chug of the engines was felt again, and the steamer began to move forward, but with a shivery, churning motion, as if it were turning. Letty knelt on the sofa and peered out through the port-hole. The night was clear and bright. Their stateroom was far enough aft to permit Letty

to catch sight of the churning foam in the wake of the vessel.

"We are turning!" she exclaimed in astonishment. "Oh, what can have happened? Have we got out of our course in some way, do you suppose?"

At that moment there was a gentle rap on the door and Mr. Jack Beckwith's voice was heard, calling Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's name.

"I trust you people aren't frightened in there," he said in a confident, reassuring voice. "Nothing has happened to us. I have just come from the captain. But our ship has picked up a wireless message from some boat in distress, and we are going to the rescue."

"Oh, how thankful I am!" ejaculated Mrs. Hartwell-Jones in a tone of the greatest relief. "Thank you for easing our fears, Mr. Beckwith, for we were greatly startled. At least, I was. But why did we stop, if nothing had happened to us?"

"The report came of a derelict in our vicinity and the captain did not wish to take any chances of hitting it."

"What about this other vessel?" queried

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones anxiously. "Where is it and how far away?"

"I don't know yet. Our wireless man was sending out a message of response when I came below to comfort people. Mother was pretty badly scared, and Ellen, too. Will you let Letty dress and come up on deck? It will be daylight in another hour, and I think it is going to be very interesting."

"Oh, Aunt Mary, please say I may!" cried Letty. "Why, I just couldn't stay here, lying peacefully in bed with such a wonderfully thrilling thing going on!"

"Of course you couldn't, and neither could I. We shall be up almost at once, Mr. Beckwith, and thank you again," called Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, her voice still a little tremulous from the recent shock.

"All right, I'll be on the lookout for you. I don't fancy a single passenger, however experienced a voyager, will be able to sleep through this night's excitement," responded Mr. Beckwith, and he hurried away.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and Letty made a hasty toilet.

"It is past three o'clock," observed Letty,

consulting her little traveling clock. "I had no idea I had been asleep for so long. Oh, I am so excited, Aunt Mary!"

As they dressed they could hear the stewards going up and down the passageways, in response to frenzied calls, explaining the true cause of the momentary stoppage and reassuring nervous passengers.

Wrapping themselves warmly, the two hurried up on deck. Almost half of the ship's passengers were already there, gathered in excited clusters or walking up and down; and more kept appearing every instant. The ship was under full speed again by now, and there was nothing to indicate that they had turned from the regular course. The ocean spread out on every side, a gray, white-capped, rolling waste, with no sign or hint of any other life upon its heaving surface.

And yet, near or far, there lay another great vessel like their own, helpless, disabled; at the mercy of that treacherous sea, peopled with human beings watching with anxious, straining eyes for a response to that marvelous call for help which they had sent out into the air. It was stupendous, miraculous!

Letty and Mary Beckwith stood at the rail near the steamer's bow, crowded in with dozens of eager, low-voiced watchers, every one with eyes fixedly gazing ahead for a first glimpse of the disabled ship. Presently stewards brought trayfuls of cups of steaming hot tea and coffee, which people drank with great comfort and relief.

The night was nearly spent and before long in the east there was a faint rosy paling of the grayness. The clear, musical ship's bell rang out eight bells. The mystery of sea and air grew.

It was just dawn when the man in the lookout, swinging solemnly to and fro in his "crow's nest," announced another ship in sight, and every one rushed to the bow, passing field-glasses eagerly from hand to hand. But it was not the vessel to whose summons they were responding. On the contrary, as they approached, they realized that this other steamer was, like themselves, speeding to the rescue.

"Oh, Aunt Mary," exclaimed Letty, dropping down beside Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and Mrs. Somers as they sat a little apart from the

throng, "it is so thrilling and—and wonderful that I can hardly bear it! Just think of that ship sending out a cry for help into this great vast distance and of having it heard hundreds and hundreds of miles away and being answered by more than one boat! For they say that that one ahead, which we are overtaking, is going to the rescue, too. They have told our ship so, by wireless. How soon do you suppose we'll reach the disabled steamer? I am so excited!"

"Letty, Letty, Letty, come quick!" shrieked Mary Beckwith's voice in extreme excitement. "Oh, where are you, Letty? They've sighted her! They've sighted her!"

Letty was off at a bound. Mary and her brothers had secured a splendid view-point at the very front of the deck, and they squeezed the eager, squirming Letty in between them. Mary pointed out a faint, dim speck on the far horizon, and Letty gazed breathlessly through the field-glasses which Mr. Beckwith held out to her. As she looked a rocket from the disabled ship shot up into the morning twilight, and burst in a sickly, smoky flare.

"A signal of distress," explained Mr. Beckwith.

"Oh, dear," sighed Letty. "I always connected sky-rockets with the Fourth of July and other jollifications."

"Well, I should think the people on board that boat would feel like jollifying now," replied Mary Beckwith. "Just think what an immense relief it must be to them to see two ships coming to their rescue."

"Yes," agreed Letty, eyeing the smaller vessel ahead of them, upon which they were gaining with some rapidity. "And I can't help hoping that we'll get there first. It would be such glory to be first at the rescue."

The big steamer forged steadily ahead, quite as calmly and straightforwardly as if it were bound on its regular course.

"If I were this ship, bound on such a wonderful errand, I should just wobble about from excitement and importance," exclaimed Letty, who always had an entertaining habit of endowing inanimate things with brains and feelings. "How can the engines chug-chug along so evenly and regularly! I should think they would be at fever heat."

Letty herself was excited almost to the point of weeping, and could talk only in jerky, detached sentences. Yet talk she must, to relieve her emotion.

Slowly, surely, the doomed vessel came into view; the dawn grew clearer, softer, and the outlines became more distinct. At length they could distinguish the throngs of passengers on her decks, crowding, straining every nerve to watch the approaching vessels. The life-boats, ready to be lowered, were swung out from the deck. One or two were filled and already in the water. Mr. Jack Beckwith pointed out a trail of smoke against the horizon and then another.

"Other ships responding," he explained briefly.

The sun rose just then, brilliant and golden, out of the eastern horizon, flooding all the vast expanse of water with a sparkling radiance that bespoke eloquently the renewed hope of day. And at that moment the passengers of the "Minerva" heard the echo of a faint, far-off cheer. The other steamer had come within hailing distance of the disabled ship.

"Sorrow lasteth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," murmured Mrs. Hartwell-Jones brokenly. "Ah, Ellen," she added, turning to Mrs. Somers, "I can't help thinking that if this wonderful discovery of wireless telegraphy had been made fourteen years ago, we might have been rescued thus, and I spared years of unhappiness!"

"I know, I know, my dear," whispered Mrs. Somers tenderly. "But think how well worth while it is to live in a world where the civilization goes forward so triumphantly; where every year evils are studied and overcome, and sorrows lessened."

Nearer and nearer they approached the unfortunate ship; the people on her decks and in the life-boats were now plainly visible. Signals were exchanged, and each spoke to the other. The steamer looked a total wreck. She was listed heavily to one side and her bow had settled morosely into the water, so that every rolling wave dashed the spray high over her.

"I should say we had reached her just about in time," remarked Mr. Beckwith to his son.

"We and others," answered Mr. Jack, and pointed again to the horizon, where the two faint streaks of smoke had resolved into other steamers hurrying like themselves to the scene.

The "Minerva" drew as close as was safe to the drifting vessel and a series of communications began between the three ships. An early call for breakfast sounded, but the "Minerva's" passengers were far too excited to go below, and the dining-room stewards, only too willing to be within touch of what was going on, came up to help the deck stewards to serve an *al fresco* breakfast.

Gradually details of the accident sifted down from the bridge, and the cause of the collision, when it became known, added romance to the episode. The wrecked ship had met with that dire calamity which has threatened seafarers since the beginning of navigation; they had struck a derelict in the night.

The wireless was kept busy among the five ships and it was settled at length that each of the two rescuing ships at hand should take a quota of the wreck's passengers, as many as they had room to accommodate with comfort, and should lie by for the other two approach-

ing ships to come up. Those in their turn were to take a like apportionment, and the remainder of the passengers and crew were to be divided among the four ships.

In the meantime, those small boats which were already filled were being rowed over, some to the "Minerva," others to the side of the "Astra," which was the name of the other rescuing ship. As the danger to life was now so inconsiderable, it was thought unnecessary to provide first for the women and children, and thus families escaped the pain and suspense of separation. Such families as contained most women or the greater number of small children were transferred first to the two ships already in waiting.

It was an absorbing scene as each life-boat was loaded slowly and systematically, lowered and started off from the vessel's side. There were many painful scenes, for the passengers, relieved from hours of the most intense and agonizing suspense, yielded to the reaction and betrayed childish emotions. Women who had borne themselves like heroes during the awful night now wept over the necessity of leaving their luggage; men showed temper

over the loss of their creature-comforts, and children wailed from hunger and loss of sleep.

The other two ships of rescue were still some distance away, and while waiting for their arrival, the captain of the "Minerva" signified his wish to pursue the dangerous derelict which had wrought such frightful damage. The captain of the wrecked ship reported that the derelict had last been seen floating to the northeast, and he indicated a faint dark mark on the horizon, unperceived before. The "Minerva's" captain sent off a small boat load of sailors who had volunteered for the mission, under the command of the coxswain, with sufficient dynamite to blow up the derelict if they could come up with her. This expedition added a new excitement to the morning.

At about seven o'clock the other two ships reached the spot and the rescue was concluded hurriedly, for the wrecked ship showed evident symptoms of a speedy sinking, and the four assisting vessels stood well away to avoid any danger of being sucked down.

Letty's heart swelled big with sympathy as

she watched the captain leave his ship, the last one off. Poor man, what it meant to him! But he had everything to be thankful for, that all his passengers and crew were saved.

Such confusion and excitement as reigned on board the "Minerva" for the remainder of that day! Every one who had a spare berth in his or her stateroom gave it up gladly to the newcomers, and all the cabins were requisitioned and partitioned off into staterooms. Letty drifted about from group to group, listening eagerly to the different descriptions of the night's sensations and perils. The captain and his mates were taken aboard one of the other ships, but the wireless operator, the real hero of the occasion, came aboard the "Minerva," and was surrounded by an eager, excited crowd of admirers and overwhelmed with questions until he actually collapsed from fatigue, both physical and mental, and was put under the charge of the ship's doctor.

The coxswain and his men, a bobbing dot on the ocean in their small boat, were picked up again, glad to report their mission suc-

cessfully ended, and one more menace to sea traffic put out of the way.

With a great blast of the steamer's horn, answered and reëchoed by those of the three other ships, the "Minerva" at last put on steam again and, turning back into her regular course, steamed away from the scene of the averted disaster and tragedy. Every moment it appeared as if the doomed ship must go down ; the sea was beginning to rise, and with every rolling wave she leaned more to the side, and her nose buried itself more hopelessly in the trough.

The passengers thronged the decks with their eyes and field-glasses fastened upon the receding hulk. At length the sun disappeared behind a bank of heavy storm-clouds, and the bright day dimmed to grayness. Smaller and smaller grew the abandoned ship until it was a mere speck upon the waters. Then suddenly a great sigh went up simultaneously from all the watchers, still straining their eyes upon the "Minerva's" deck, for the faint black hulk was seen dimly to lurch, settle and then to sink slowly, slowly out of sight beneath the waves.

But ah, thank God for the wonderful brain of a man who, by his great discovery and invention, had saved the hundreds of lives which might otherwise have gone down, helpless and despairing, into an unknown grave!

CHAPTER VI

THE FAMOUS MONSIEUR BLANC

THE delay for the rescue made the "Minerva" a full day behind her time in docking at Liverpool, and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, who had planned to linger for a few days in the cathedral town of Chester, decided to go straight on to London with the Beckwiths, who wished to proceed there directly in order to have ample time for the preparations for their daughter's wedding.

A London train was in waiting, drawn up beside the dock, and Letty had only a moment in which to contemplate the foreign railway carriages with their side entrances, before she was tucked into one of the narrow compartments with its long, cushioned cross seats, "just like an overgrown sofa," she said in a letter to Emma Haines. They had disembarked at Liverpool quite early in the morning, and as the train rushed through the midland counties, the countryside was in

the full flush of a delicious June day. Letty sat immovable at the window, taking in with eager eyes each picturesque, pastoral scene as it swept by; the white, vine-covered cottages with their thatched roofs and quaint gardens, the high hedgerows, pink and white masses of hawthorn bloom, the lovely, old-fashioned gardens so carefully tended, the rural villages with crooked streets and old crooked houses. And then, really long before it could seem possible, the villages gave way to suburban rows of houses, the hedgerows to high brick and stone walls and—London was reached; great, busy, fascinating, historic London!

“Oh, Aunt Mary, I can’t talk about it—yet,” Letty answered breathlessly, when Mrs. Hartwell-Jones asked her for her impressions. “It is—well, sort of breath-taking to think that we are actually here.”

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones laughed, kissed her and replied gayly:

“Well, get your breath back as comfortably as you wish, childie. I know the feeling. London is a vast place; not merely in size, but there are so many different sorts of asso-

ciations wrapped about it; historical, political, literary and social. We'll not be able to see everything, of course. One could hardly do that in a lifetime. But we shall see what we can comfortably and profitably. The trouble with most sightseers is their ambition. They want to see everything and generally end up by remembering nothing."

"I know. They see so many things that there isn't time to classify them all, and after a while their poor brains get so tired that each impression slips out of its own little cell and they all get muddled together like a kaleidoscope."

"Exactly," laughed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. "I remember once talking to a lady who had just returned from a Mediterranean tour. She wished to relate some incident of a certain place and referred to her brother for the locality. 'George,' she said, 'where was it that we saw the Pyramids?'"

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had taken rooms for herself and Letty in the small, delightfully English hotel where the Beckwith family or any member of it always stopped when in London, and where they were well known

and welcomed as old and respected patrons. The bride-to-be, Miss Agnes Beckwith, was already there, with the maiden cousin who had lived with her during her period of study in Paris. Miss Beckwith was to marry an English officer, ordered unexpectedly to India, and with no time to go to America to be married, and it was considered much more sensible, as Miss Beckwith was already on the European side of the water, to have the wedding in England, and the Beckwith family were plunged at once into a gay vortex of wedding preparations.

The sensational event that had interrupted their passage across had told more heavily on Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's nerves than she had been willing at the time to admit, and for several days after their establishment in London she was completely incapacitated by a bad nervous headache. Letty might have felt a bit forlorn if it had not been for Mr. Jack Beckwith. It was all very well to say that the mere being in London was enough in itself, but one cannot be a very active part of anything, shut up in a small hotel. The novelty of the waiters' accent, and of the endless

procession of omnibuses and cabs driving by on the left side of the street soon wore off. Then Mr. Jack Beckwith volunteered his services as guide.

“Mother and Ellen are entirely too absorbed in the approaching function to be interested in anything or any one else,” he complained, “and father spends his mornings at the museum. I don’t even get much of a chance at Ellen’s kids, for they are constantly being spirited off to amuse Aunt Agnes or to be fitted with their flower-girl dresses at Liberty’s. So, little Miss Grey, if you and Mary and Seth don’t take pity upon me, I shall pine and fade away from loneliness.”

Letty laughed and expressed her prompt willingness to take whatever sort of pity upon his loneliness Mr. Jack chose to suggest.

His plans were already laid for several delightful excursions and the quartette had many a charming day together. They visited the Tower and the National Gallery, of course. “We must pay our respects to the conventions,” Mr. Jack said gravely. Then there were Westminster and St. Paul’s. Then they visited the Wallace and Tait collections, the

National Gallery of Portraits and other galleries until Letty declared she was beginning to feel like the woman who could not remember where she had seen the Pyramids. Then they rested their intellects by a visit to Madame Tussaud's, a trip to Earl's Court, where a big Exposition was going on, and a delightful day spent at Hampton Court.

On another occasion they drove out to Lord Leighton's charming house, and spent two delightful hours in its tiled and fountained rooms. Another day—perhaps the most delightful of all—was spent at Windsor Castle.

But one of the most interesting occasions was when Letty was taken to "the city" to visit all the old landmarks made famous by Dickens, Dr. Johnson, and other great literary lights. Mary Beckwith was not always able to join these excursions for she, too, was "afflicted," as her brother expressed it, with dressmakers. But Seth was always of the party and as he watched Letty's eager enthusiasm and absorbed interest, he felt as if somehow he had missed something in his former explorations of London's wonders.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, before long, was able to join the expeditions, and lived over again all her early joys of foreign travel in witnessing Letty's ardor.

But an event of much more importance to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones than seeing the sights of London took place a day or two before Miss Beckwith's wedding. Miss Beckwith had studied singing in Paris under the famous master Monsieur Blanc, a professor who had trained the voices of some of the world's most famous opera singers. He had come to London expressly to attend this wedding, for Miss Agnes Beckwith was one of his favorite pupils. Partly in acknowledgment of the letter to him, which Madame Henri had written and which Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had presented at the first opportunity, and partly from a willingness to please Miss Beckwith, monsieur consented to hear Letty sing. Consequently he was present at a small gathering in Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's private parlor of the hotel, at which gathering it was understood that Letty was to sing.

Letty was surprised to discover that she was not in the least nervous at the prospect.

Either her limited experience in singing at school concerts had been sufficient to conquer any disposition toward stage-fright, or else her mind and heart were too full of other matters at present to permit her to take in the importance of such an occasion.

Upon the night of their arrival in London, she and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had been drawn to their window by the voice of a street singer. The singer was young, a girl not many years older than Letty herself, and a sudden tremor had shaken the child as she exclaimed, turning to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones :

“Oh, Aunt Mary, if you had not found me when you did, I might have been earning my living in some such way as that !”

The song the girl was singing captivated them both. It was an old English ballad, plaintive and melodious. Letty was charmed.

“I wish I knew what that song is, Aunt Mary,” she exclaimed. “I should like to sing it myself.”

“We’ll soon find out, child,” Mrs. Hartwell-Jones replied promptly, and rang the bell.

She sent down a coin—too much perhaps

to reward a mere street singer ; certainly the decorous waiter lifted his eyebrows in discreet disapproval—with a message requesting to know the name of the pretty song ; and the waiter had brought back the desired information, together with an awkwardly delivered version of the beggar's profuse thanks. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones bought the ballad the next day and Letty had sung it again and again, in and out of season, for it was one of those lilting tunes that run in the head, until the quaint old song, with its foolishly tender words, became a part of her.

When Mrs. Hartwell-Jones asked her what she had in mind to sing for Monsieur Blanc, Letty expressed a preference for this selfsame old-time ballad. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones hesitated to give her consent at first, but finally acquiesced, realizing that what comes from the heart is generally the most true and spontaneous.

“ I can always sing the things that I like much better than the things that are just musically good,” Letty said. “ And besides, I dare say Monsieur Blanc will find one English song just like another—I mean the words, of

course," she added hastily, seeing the look of amused denial in her Aunt Mary's face. "And I couldn't sing him any French songs, unless, maybe, the jingles I learned with Jane Baker's class for the last-day entertainment."

"Well, monsieur might like to hear them," laughed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones; "they might prove a pleasant change to him from the arias and solos of his grand opera pupils."

All the Beckwith family came to the tea-party, including the bride elect, the bridegroom—a very delightful man, by the way, simple mannered, direct, and with a sense of humor, to whom the family "took" at once—and the three Somers children, who were already acquiring an English look with their chubby, rosy cheeks and striped socks. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones was feeling distinctly nervous, and endeavored vainly to concentrate her thoughts upon the number of lumps of sugar her guests took in their respective cups of tea, and whether they preferred toasted muffins or hot scones, and upon the important matter of seeing that there were jam and cakes enough.

Letty was in gales of laughter over an episode of the morning.

"Aunt Mary was giving orders for this afternoon's tea," she regaled Mary Beckwith with the joke, "and the waiter made a mental note of everything. You could almost see his brain working, it was all so mechanical, ticking off the different things like a well-oiled typewriter, and saying, 'Very good, mum,' after each item. Well, it was all arranged and he went off, to return in a jiffy with that funny, apologetic knock he has, and stuck his head in at the door. 'Beg pardon, m'lady,' he said gravely, 'but did you say, mum, as I was to 'eat the scones?'"

Monsieur Blanc arrived while this little conversation was going on, and proved to be a very quiet, unobtrusive little gentleman, who spoke English fluently and almost without an accent. He accepted a cup of tea gratefully. He had been in England often enough, he explained, to grow fond of the national beverage, and he admitted that he had been too busy all day to get any lunch. He moved about the room with his teacup, talking to one and another of the guests until Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's heart sank a little. He seemed so very like any other afternoon caller

that she wondered if he had forgotten for what great purpose he had been invited. She fidgeted with her teacup and worried secretly lest Letty should eat too many sweets and cause her voice to grow husky.

At length, Monsieur Blanc turned from a discussion of Norman architecture as Letty offered him a cake, and said simply :

“Is this the little girl who is to sing to us this afternoon?”

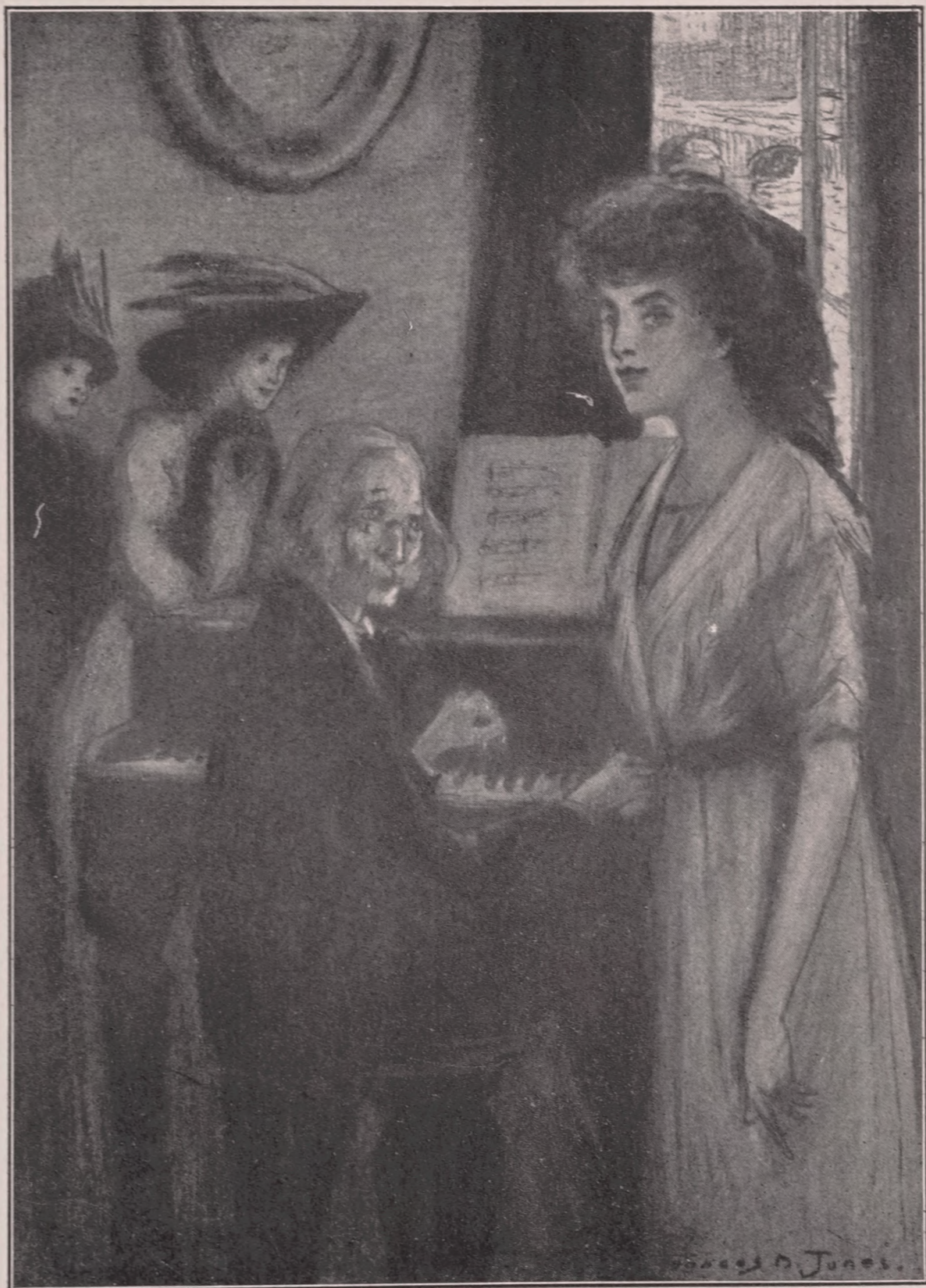
“Yes, monsieur, I will sing gladly, if you wish it,” answered Letty brightly.

“Then I shall be charmed,” he replied with a low bow, and glancing at his watch. “Might we begin?”

Letty looked across at Mrs. Hartwell-Jones for approval and then crossed to the open piano that stood in one corner of the room. The music of the ballad she had just learned lay open upon the rack, but Letty stopped short in sudden embarrassment.

“I forgot that I have no one to accompany me!” she exclaimed in dismay.

“Mademoiselle does not accompany herself?” inquired monsieur, in what Mrs. Hart-



"I WILL PLAY FOR YOU, MY CHILD"

well-Jones nervously fancied to be a tone of reproach.

Letty shook her head.

“When I am all by myself, practicing, I can touch a few of the chords, enough to keep me going,” she explained simply, “but I have had piano lessons for only a year, and I am dreadfully slow. Perhaps Seth would accompany me on his violin?” she added hopefully.

But Monsieur Blanc interposed hurriedly.

“No, no. The violin is delightful, charming, by itself or with other music, but not with the voice. It robs the voice. I will play for you, my child. What is this?” And seating himself at the piano the great maestro thrummed softly the opening chords of the simple little song.

Letty, watching, saw that he liked the music, and when he was ready for her, sang the ballad through with all the warmth of tender feeling it invariably awakened in her. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones drew into the background and her guests seated themselves about the room in quiet, absorbed silence.

At the end of the song the silence continued

for a moment, in a breathless, absorbed hush, more complimentary than deafening applause. Then Miss Beckwith, who had heard Letty sing before, clapped her hands and cried in French, "There, there, monsieur, what did I tell you? Was I not right?"

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones rose and moved forward impulsively. Monsieur Blanc turned on the piano stool and faced her, and oh, the wonder of it—his eyes were filled with tears!

"Who taught her to sing like that?" he demanded brusquely.

"No one, monsieur; that is just—just Letty."

Monsieur Blanc then turned to Letty and held out both his hands.

"You have a golden treasure locked up in that throat of yours, mon enfant," he said solemnly. "Guard it sacredly and come to me when you are two or three years older. May she, madame?" he demanded imperiously of Mrs. Hartwell-Jones.

And Miss Beckwith looked on with delight at the amazing spectacle of the eagerly sought maestro suing for the privilege of a pupil.

CHAPTER VII

A CURE FOR THE BLUES

It was the day of Miss Beckwith's wedding. The ceremony and the gay wedding breakfast were over and the bride and groom had been sped upon their honeymoon with as much rice as was decorous in a conservative English hotel. The few guests had departed, and the Beckwith family sat around with the dull, flat feeling which every one experiences after a party or any exciting event.

"What shall we do next?" every one asks of every one else at such a time, but no one ever has any answer to make. It always seems so hard to settle down to quiet and commonplaceness again. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones was about to take her departure with the rest but Mrs. Beckwith detained her.

"Do stay and cheer us up," she said. "We are all feeling dull and forlorn. Perhaps Letty and Seth will give us a little music?"

"Now, I have a proposition to make, Mrs.

Hartwell-Jones, which I have been keeping up my sleeve until all the flurry of the wedding was over," announced Mr. Jack Beckwith, after Letty had sung to Seth's accompaniment. "It is warranted a sure cure for the blues."

"You are a wonder, Jack, if you have something that will cheer us up now," said Mrs. Somers pensively. "It has been tantalizing to have had Agnes for a few days, only to lose her again. What is your proposition?"

"That six of us at least go on a motor trip; or two car loads if every one is so disposed," answered her brother promptly. "You are not planning to start for the Tyrol yet, are you, Ellen?"

"No, I think it will be too cold there before July. But what about father and mother?"

"We are going to Tunbridge Wells for a rest," replied Mrs. Beckwith promptly, "and we'll take the children there with us, Ellen, if you want to go motoring with Jack. The air of Tunbridge Wells is splendid, and they can play all day long on the Common. No harm can possibly come to them."

"Good for you, mother. Now, Mrs. Hart-

well-Jones, how about you? You and Letty will surely go?"

"We should enjoy it tremendously," responded Mrs. Hartwell-Jones heartily. "I have no plans except to settle down in some peaceful spot to do my work, and that can wait. If your plan is carried out I'll keep my eyes open while we motor and perhaps shall find the very place I want."

Mr. Jack Beckwith had no need to seek approval of his plan from Letty. Her shining eyes spoke for her. She could hardly sit quiet at the thought of such a glorious prospect. So he unfolded his scheme, which was pretty complete, for Mr. Jack had felt moderately sure that his proposal would be accepted by some members of the party, at least.

"The first question to settle," he began in a businesslike tone, "is where we want to go. That is, whether to the northern or southern part of England."

"Oh, the southern, by all means," agreed every one unanimously.

"Good. That would be my choice."

"They say that Devonshire and Cornwall are ravishing in June," added Mrs. Somers.

"Very good. Now to decide on a route."

As he spoke, Mr. Jack took up a large, thick square envelope which he had had tucked in at the back of his chair, and spread it out upon the table. It was a map of England, mounted on linen and divided into sections so that it could be folded into quite a small square with only one section uppermost at a time.

"And it has the further advantage," Mr. Jack pointed out, "of being water proof. For the luckiest of motorists strike occasional rain, you know."

Every one gathered eagerly about the table upon which the map was spread.

"Where did you get such a fine one, Jack?" asked his father, much interested. "It is exactly what you need for a motor trip. You must have had this plan in mind for some time."

"I have had," admitted his son frankly. "I knew we should all feel let down and blue after Agnes's wedding, and I thought a jolly motor trip would be just the thing for a tonic. I was so sure of my project meeting with approval that I went so far as

to interview a chauffeur. He is next to engaged."

Then followed a long and animated discussion over the map, and Mr. Jack Beckwith sketched out a route which suited every one's taste precisely.

"Only one thing remains to be settled," Mr. Jack said at length, but was interrupted by several disagreeing voices.

"Only one thing? I can think of a dozen," commented his sister. "To begin with, is everybody sure that it is right for me to leave the children? Would Edward be willing?"

Edward was Mr. Somers, who had not been able to leave his business, but was to join his family later. Mrs. Somers felt her responsibilities in his absence.

"Would he be willing!" echoed her mother reproachfully. "Not willing to have the children with their grandmother? Why, Ellen!"

"But I don't want them to be a burden to you, mother."

"Burden! Bless my heart, who ever heard of the cherubs being a burden," ejaculated Mr. Beckwith in his turn.

And so that matter was settled. Other questions were settled as speedily and even the day and hour for a start agreed upon. Mr. Jack Beckwith undertook to have at the door in readiness a satisfactory motor car and chauffeur with whom, unbeknown to the rest, he had been negotiating.

"And now, to go back to my original remark," he observed placidly. "There remains only one question to be settled—about the route, as I meant to say if I had been allowed to finish my sentence a while ago. Shall we go to Canterbury by way of Maidstone, and down the famous weald of Kent, or through Rochester?"

"Rochester!" cried Letty. "That is where Mr. Pickwick started from on his famous drive to Dingley Dell, and where Mr. Alfred Jingle nearly got Mr. Tupman into so much trouble. I should love to see Rochester."

In view of this preference and as the others had no choice in the matter, the Rochester route was decided upon, and it was a very happy group that met at dinner an hour later, instead of the lachrymose family who had expected to seek a melancholy diversion in

speculations as to where the bride and groom were at that particular time and whether they were thinking of the loved ones left behind.

Three days later a gay party, consisting of Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, Mrs. Somers, Mr. Jack Beckwith, Mary, Letty and Seth, set off in a motor car from the London hotel. It was a bright, sunny day, deliciously warm and radiant. The employees of the hotel gathered around to see them off and to Letty's great amusement the boots took up an attitude in the doorway and asked to be photographed. One of Letty's joys was a new camera, and she was only too willing to take a snap shot of the animated scene.

Mr. and Mrs. Beckwith, with Mrs. Somers' three children, were there to wish them a pleasant time. Mrs. Somers was privately tearful at the impending separation, but her three children were frankly radiant over the prospect of a fortnight's visit with granny.

The traffic through the busy London streets was incredibly dense, but so well regulated that the chauffeur had scarcely sufficient opportunity to show his skill in driving. For Mr. Jack, as Letty had fallen into the way of call-

ing him to distinguish him from his father, had been most particular in his choice of a chauffeur and had taken several runs with Horrocks, to test his capabilities. Letty secretly compared his driving with that of Mr. Jack, greatly to the latter's credit.

Their route carried them down Regent Street to Piccadilly Circus, across Trafalgar Square to the Strand and so on down to the Tower bridge and past the Southwark Cathedral, all historic ground.

"We are like modern Canterbury pilgrims," laughed Seth. "Let's each tell a 'Canterbury tale.'"

Thereupon each member of the party related an anecdote, amusing or pathetic, concerning a former visit to the famous, oldest cathedral town. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, who was afraid her little girl would feel out of it, never having been to Canterbury, was delighted to hear her respond promptly, when her turn came, with an account of little David Copperfield's journey to Canterbury, told so graphically that every one was delighted.

Seth was much interested in the shipping at Gravesend, and as they neared Rochester all

three of the children pieced together their recollection of "Great Expectations," and the "Pickwick Papers." A local guide-book had told them that "Miss Havisham's" house was presumably located on the outskirts of Rochester.

"And we are to lunch at the 'Bull,' the very inn from which Mr. Pickwick started on his celebrated drive," Mr. Jack informed them, as they entered the town. "But we have time before lunch to visit both the castle and cathedral, if you wish. The cathedral is not very remarkable, but the castle, with its astonishingly thick walls, is most impressive."

Their afternoon run was through a peaceful, lovely valley, dotted with picturesque villages and beside pleasant streams. They reached Canterbury in time to attend evening-song in the great, wonderful cathedral with its exquisite stonework and vast dim vistas. Afterward they strolled about within and without, and lived through again the old horrible tragedy of Thomas à Becket's martyrdom.

The next two weeks were a time of greatest happiness, as well as being both instructive

and interesting. The motorists found that they could go in their car by routes which the ordinary traveler could not take, and so could visit many points of beauty and interest unknown to the average tourist. The byroads and lanes were for the most part in almost as good condition as the remarkably-kept highroads, and it was very delightful to be independent of time and trains. There was not even the necessity of being at any given point at any given time, for the question of lunch was settled by carrying it with them, picnic fashion.

With hampers stocked for bodily refreshment, and two or three additional tins of petrol for the motor strapped to the step, the party would set off each morning with the whole day before them. There was always an objective point for the journey's end, but whether they reached that point at noon or late night mattered little.

Over the picturesque winding roads, as smooth as a drawing-room floor—as if they had been sandpapered, Letty said—they bowled; or, if some one's guide-book had hinted at the beauty of some ruin of abbey or

castle somewhat off the beaten track, into a side lane they would turn, confident of fairly good roads at the worst, and always picturesque scenery. For the byways of England are the most charming parts. The broad, breezy commons with sheep and mild-eyed cows grazing thereon; unexpected dips in the moorland with exquisite glimpses of green woodland or park beyond; and always the low, wide cottages, of gray stone or white-washed cobb, thatch-roofed and vine-covered.

At lunch time a desirable place would be selected, never difficult to find in a land where every turning brought to view a suggestive spot for picnicking, sometimes in a small grove beside a rippling brook, or drawn up in a wayside lane, hidden from the curious public road by high hedges, and a delectable meal was spread out and partaken of with hearty appetites. Sometimes they lunched very romantically, in the shadow of a ruined castle, and again occasionally they would give up their picnic and eat conventionally in a hotel en route, of the typical English luncheon of cold chicken and ham, boiled potatoes and gooseberry tart. Later in the day, if

they had lingered too long by the way to inspect historic relics, there was always a tea house by the way to revive overtaxed muscles.

Letty found these tea houses quite irresistible and, if it had been possible, would have liked to stop at almost every one. They were never pretentious; that was their charm; generally a cottage with a straight path leading up to the door between beds of gay, old-fashioned flowers and in a window displayed the alluring sign, "Teas Provided."

One afternoon, a series of slight misfortunes with tires delayed the party until dusk fell, with fifteen or twenty miles still to run before reaching their destination. It was long past the regulation afternoon tea hour, but one of these tempting signs stopped the party by the wayside. Letty, being nearest the door, hopped out and ran up the path to ask if a possible tea could be provided at that late hour.

"Indeed it can," was the cordial response to her query. "The kettle is just on the boil."

They all bundled indoors and seated themselves about the various small tables in the tea room, tired, thirsty and happy, while their

hospitable hostess bustled in and out with replenished plates of bread and butter, beaming at the hearty praise bestowed upon her crisp, home-made cakes. This half gypsy, living-by-the-way existence was idyllic.

As they went farther south, the scenery grew more and more picturesque, and they found the famous Devonshire quite as lovely as former enthusiastic visitors had described it. On the border of Dorset and Devonshire, their route carried them through the quaint fishing village of Lyme Regis, popular in a modest way among English summer sojourners, although little known to the average American tourist. That day was to influence not only the remainder of Letty's summer but the whole future of herself and her beloved Aunt Mary, if they could have but known.

They stopped at an inn, situated half-way up the amazingly steep main street of the town, for luncheon. Mrs. Somers looked up at the sign.

"The Three Cups Inn," she read. "Why, of course, this is where the Musgroves came," she exclaimed, and went on, in answer to the curious questioning in Letty's and Mary's

eyes: "Don't you remember, in Jane Austen's novel 'Persuasion'?"

"So it is, and where Louisa injured her head jumping off the 'Cobb,'" added Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. "I have always wondered what the 'Cobb' looked like."

"What in the world is a 'Cobb,' except the kind that corn grows on, Aunt Mary?" asked Letty curiously.

Both the girls acknowledged that they had never read any of Jane Austen's novels, and Mrs. Somers exclaimed:

"Then you both have a treat in store for you. Mary, I'm afraid I have neglected that branch of your education."

"I'll subscribe to 'Mudie' at once and read it," replied Mary; "but do tell us what a 'Cobb' is."

"You shall all see for yourselves, after lunch," promised Mr. Jack.

When the landlord was consulted as to the quickest way to the "Cobb" he informed them proudly that he had a private way to the Parade, thus having a great advantage over his rival of "The Golden Lion" across the way. He led them along a narrow path that

threaded the hotel kitchen garden and terminated in a steep, irregular flight of rough stone steps. From this garden a sudden, unexpected view of the bay was revealed, and every one stopped involuntarily to look and admire. The bay formed an almost exact semicircle with the high hills sloping steeply to the sea, which simmered and gleamed like a great sapphire under the bright sun. The "Parade" to which the steps led down was a broad concrete walk along the coast, where the summer visitors congregated at certain hours to walk. Beyond was a broad expanse of smooth sandy beach and on the other side, squeezed close against the steep cliff-side, were built quaint houses, large and small, nearly all of which bore the placard, conspicuously displayed: "Apartments."

The "Cobb" proved to be a broad, stout stone pier, fulfilling the double duty of break-water to the peaceful little harbor, and of a dock for its small fishing boats. It was built in a slight curve, and in two stories, as it were, each level broad enough to permit at least six or eight persons to walk abreast.

"I suppose your three-volume-novel heroine

jumped from the higher level to the lower," observed Seth. "Just like a girl to tumble; it's as easy as pie," and he proceeded to demonstrate.

"How beautiful the sea is," sighed Mrs. Somers rapturously, and then regretted her tactless speech, for she supposed the sea could never look attractive to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, with her tragic memories. But —

"Yes, it is," agreed that lady unexpectedly. "If the sea were always like this I should soon learn not to fear it. I wonder if this little bay is always so peaceful?"

"Generally, I believe, as it is so sheltered. The sun seems to love this southern coast of England, and to caress it with its gentlest breezes."

On their way back, the three younger members of the party ran down for a romp on the beach, and, Mrs. Somers and Mr. Jack consulting the map to settle a discussion concerning their route, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones slipped away unperceived, and no one saw her enter an old, pink-tinted little house that stood upon a small graveled terrace, raised some half dozen steps above the level of the

Parade. The heavy beams and bulging walls denoted the age of the house, and with its low heavy door and odd coloring it was most picturesque. In a front window was displayed the customary sign indicating that lodgings were to be let. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's visit was short but apparently satisfactory, to judge by her expression when she rejoined the others on the Parade, just beginning to miss her.

"Letty," said Mrs. Hartwell-Jones that evening, when she and Letty were alone in their bedroom in the hotel at Sidmouth, "how did you like Lyme Regis?"

"Oh, I loved it, Aunt Mary. It was all so queer and odd and jolly, with those little crooked side streets and that lovely beach! I longed to explore it all."

"Did you, dear? Well, then, you'll have a chance, for I have engaged lodgings for us there."

"Oh, Aunt Mary, what fun! When are we to go?"

"When our motor trip is finished. You know we had planned to settle down quietly for the greater part of the summer."

"Yes, of course, and I think Lyme Regis

will be an ideal spot, but, Aunt Mary, shall you be happy at the seaside?"

"A curious thing about Lyme Regis is that the sea had no horror for me there. It seemed kinder, gentler than I have ever known it. I suppose it is the secluded little bay, but I feel as if I could like the sea, if not really love it, at Lyme Regis."

"And it will help you not to fear the ocean. How comforting that would be," sighed Letty contentedly. "Aunt Mary, this summer is just like living in a story book."

CHAPTER VIII

UNEXPECTED VISITORS

“ London, July 1, 19—.

“ DEAR EMMA :

“ The very most wonderful and beautiful thing that could happen to any one is over. Really, I didn't know any one could be so happy, Emma Haines, so completely happy as I was on that motor trip ! Though I'm afraid I've said that a good many times about different things in this last two years. But it's so.

“ I hardly know where to begin writing about it. You have had my post-cards to tell the different interesting places we visited, but nothing could make you feel my feelings. I just don't know how to write them. It was the combination of everything that made it all so perfect ; the motoring, the lovely country scenes, the terribly interesting old ruins and cathedrals, and having people that I love with me to share it all.

“But more than anything, it is England itself. How I love it! It's very hard to tell about; everything is so like home and yet so different. The scenery everywhere is perfectly beautiful and like a picture—except just the outside of London which is like the ugly outside of any other big city. But all the little country villages are so dear! The houses aren't built of frame, like ours at home, but of soft, brownish-red brick or tiles in this part of the country and down in Devonshire of a stuff called cobb, whitewashed and with roofs of straw, like those in the post-card I sent you, which is called a thatch.

“And flowers grow everywhere! Especially roses. The tiniest wayside house will have a garden of beautifully tended old-fashioned flowers and generally the house itself covered by rose vines, with blossoms of pink, crimson or cream-color. The last kind are called Gloire de Dijon and are perfectly exquisite. They grow by millions down in that part of the country where Aunt Mary and I are to go day after to-morrow, to spend the rest of the summer, at Lyme Regis, the dearest little town! I think I sent you a post-

card of it, but I'll send lots more when we are settled there. Now, I want to tell you about some of our days in the motor. Oh, Emma, it seems almost impossible to believe it is all over!

"You got the colored cards I sent you of Dartmoor, didn't you? With all the wonderful purple heather in bloom, and miles and miles and miles of beautiful, soft, brown moorland, without a house or a human being in sight! I am sure all the fairies have emigrated to Dartmoor; there are so many dewy little hollows for them to hide in, and soft smooth spots for their dances. When I grow up I'm going to write a story about Dartmoor. I know I could make it interesting; and if I wanted excitement I could put in an escaped convict, for one of England's biggest prisons is at Princetown, right in the middle of the moor. They say sometimes a prisoner does escape, but gets lost on the moor and starves to death, poor soul.

"Another wonderful experience was the night we spent at Tintagel, where King Arthur was born. It was so thrilling to know that he really and truly lived, once upon a time.

And in the big hotel there, named after him, they have a round table made in imitation of the one which he sat around with his knights. We saw the real round table at Winchester, in the great hall, which is all that is left of the castle there. The table is hung on the wall, because the legs had got so weak.

“On our way up we crossed Exmoor, which is not so big as Dartmoor, but very beautiful. Mary and Seth told me the story of Lorna Doone. The Doones lived on Exmoor, and you and I must read the story, for it sounded very thrilling.

“But what was more exciting than Lorna Doone was, just as we were finishing a picnic afternoon tea in a nice little grove on the edge of the moor, a gate near us clicked and out rode a huntsman in a scarlet coat. He said to us, with his funny little English accent: ‘Have you seen the stag?’ Of course we were all wildly excited, for Mr. Jack Beckwith said it was a deer hunt, and sure enough, a minute or so later out of the wood appeared a whole pack of hounds and half a dozen people on horseback, one of them a lady, all gay in scarlet riding coats. The

dogs had lost the scent and the whole hunt rode slowly up a lovely woodsy road, the hounds running here and there, sniffing and snuffing. The huntsman, whom we had seen first, rode on ahead, and as soon as he came to an open space left the others and went down a long slope and up the other side. The dogs followed him and the rest all waited, not knowing just what to do. Suddenly the huntsman, looking so stunning in his bright red coat, far away on the other side of the valley, lifted his horn and blew. Oh, Emma, you can't guess how exciting it was! Just as he sounded his horn a great red deer appeared on the top of the ridge behind him! It had come out of the wood and went bounding out across the moor. In two jiffies every one was off helter-skelter after it, the huntsman in the lead of course, blowing his horn again, the dogs at his heels and then all the other hunters, riding down the steep hillside as easily as if it were a level road, the lady too. I wish I could ride as well as that!"

Just as Letty reached this point in her letter she was interrupted by a knock on the door. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, who was sitting

by the window with her book, called "Come in," and a waiter entered, bearing two cards on a tray.

"Why, Letty," exclaimed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones in pleased surprise, as she read the cards, "you will never guess who has called on us. Ask the ladies to come up at once, please," she added to the waiter, who bowed and retired.

Letty left her absorbing letter and ran across the room. She read the first card which her Aunt Mary held out to her, with puzzled eyes:

"'Lady Anvers.' Who is that, Aunt Mary? I thought you meant it was somebody that I knew."

"I think you do know her, dear," replied her aunt merrily, and handed her the second card.

"'Miss Clara Markham,'" read Letty, pleased but more puzzled than ever. "I shall be awfully glad to see Clara," she said, "but whom is she with? Oh, Aunt Mary, do tell me, quick, quick! I can tell by your eyes that it is somebody nice, and I must know before they come in. Hurry, Aunt

Mary." And she fairly jumped up and down in her impatience.

"If you would only stop to think, I am sure you would know, my dear, but I see you are in too much of a fidget to use your brain, so I'll help you. Whom did Clara Markham come over here to England to visit?"

"Oh, Miss Reese, Miss Reese!" shouted Letty in delight, and as if in answer to her name, there stood that lady in the doorway.

"Letty!"

"Miss Reese!"

There was a rapturous embrace, and then the two stepped back and gazed steadily at each other for a long moment.

"I should have known you," Letty then declared. "You haven't changed a particle, Miss Reese, not a particle."

"One thing about her has changed, Letty dear, her name, and that you must remember," interposed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones gently.

Letty blushed and looked sorry and confused.

"I beg pardon," she said quickly, "but you know you have always been 'Miss Reese' in my thoughts, always. Even the

day I saw you married. But I shall try to remember."

"Don't try, Letty dear. The little old name is very sweet to me, and brings back the past so vividly. But my dear little girl, what happy days these are for you! And what a splendidly healthy, rosy-cheeked girl you have grown to be."

"Thanks to my precious Aunt Mary," answered Letty ardently, turning to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones with an eloquent glance that spoke volumes of gratefulness and affection.

"And may Aunt Mary and I become friends?" asked Lady Anvers. "We have a great mutual interest even if we have not been properly introduced."

Every one laughed. Letty and Clara looked embarrassed at their want of manners and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and Lady Anvers shook hands.

"Well!" exclaimed Letty, when the excitement had somewhat quieted down. "How very odd this is, and yet how natural it seems. Here I am sitting in the private parlor of a London hotel, talking to you as if it was the most matter-of-course thing in

the world. Oh, but I am glad to see you again, Miss Reese ! ”

“ Whatever did you think of me, dear child, when I never sent you word after leaving Philadelphia ? ”

“ I never lost faith in you. I always knew I should hear some day. ”

“ I confess that I did neglect you at first. Being just married is a most absorbing business, as you two young people will discover for yourselves some day. But after a time, when I found that my chances of returning to Philadelphia grew more and more dim, then I did write to you, but never received any answer. And finally, after a long interval, the letter was returned to me from the dead-letter office. ”

“ I knew you had written ! I always said so, ” sighed Letty blissfully. “ I had gone from our address, you see, and that is why it did not reach me. But oh, I am so glad you wrote. ”

They talked together for some time about the past, present and future, and then Mrs. Hartwell-Jones rang to order tea.

“ Oh, don't, please, ” interposed Lady Anvers, “ for Clara and I wanted you and

Letty to go with us to Fuller's for tea. Letty dear, do you remember your first ice-cream soda-water?"

"I shall never forget that first rapturous sip!"

"And I want to stand treat again, just as I did that day," added Clara Markham.

"It would be great fun. Aunt Mary, may we go?"

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones was quite in the mood for the expedition and they set off as soon as she and Letty could put on hats and gloves. The two girls walked in front, comparing their impressions and experiences of English travel, while Mrs. Hartwell-Jones plied Lady Anvers with questions concerning her early acquaintance with Letty, for Mrs. Hartwell-Jones was never tired of hearing about the days of her little girl's life before she had become a part of it.

They lingered over their glasses, for the big, crowded room was gay and it was most amusing to watch the people come and go. Then, as they were gathering their things together for departure, Lady Anvers explained the real object of her visit.

“Clara and I are very anxious to have Letty for a visit,” she said to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. “My country place is in Surrey, only a little over an hour from London by train. And we will take the best of care of Letty.”

“I am sure you would,” responded Mrs. Hartwell-Jones heartily, looking across at Letty’s expressive face. “What shall I say, child? Will you go?”

“Oh, Miss Reese—I beg pardon, I mean Lady Anvers—I should love to go. Love it dearly, dearly! But I think I’d better not, thank you.”

Lady Anvers looked surprised and a bit hurt at this, and Clara Markham exclaimed in great disappointment:

“Why, Letty, we had counted on you! You simply must come. Mary is coming, too, and we are going to have such larks!”

“I am sure it would be too jolly for words, but I can’t leave Aunt Mary alone.”

“Then Aunt Mary shall come too, if she will?” responded Lady Anvers heartily. “It would give us the greatest pleasure in the world.”

“Thank you very much, but I must get to

my work. I have dawdled longer than I intended already, and I shall have my publishers clamoring, like *Oliver Twist*, for more, if I do not settle down to my writing soon. But, Letty dear, I can easily spare you for your visit. You must not sacrifice yourself for me. I shall be busy every day, you know."

"But only in the mornings, Aunt Mary. Perhaps Lady Anvers will invite me again some time. I don't like to miss the visit, but you see, Lady Anvers, we are just going to this new place and it would be so forlorn for Aunt Mary to settle down there in lodgings alone."

"Of course it would, and I understand your feelings perfectly. We shall put off our party until later in the summer. It can be done as easily as not, as we have not invited Mary yet. I see, Letty dear, that you are the same thoughtful little girl as ever, always putting other people's comfort and pleasure before your own."

Letty was quite overwhelmed by this cordial praise, and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones glowed under it more warmly than if she had received a personal compliment.

"I was very proud of my dear little girl this afternoon," she said tenderly, after their visitors had gone. "Lady Anvers' praise was very sweet."

Letty colored bashfully.

"I didn't really deserve it, Aunt Mary. Of course I should dearly love to go to visit her. I have never forgotten all her kindness to my precious mother and me, back in the old days. And I am glad she is going to ask me again some other time.

"But, Aunt Mary, I truly didn't want to go just now, a bit. I want to go with you. I wouldn't have missed the fun and excitement of starting our lodgings in Lyme Regis for anything."

As she spoke, Letty crossed the room and knelt down beside her Aunt Mary's chair, looking up at her with eager, shining eyes.

"It is such fun to do things with you, dear Aunt Mary. We always do have such awfully good times together, don't we?"

"Indeed, indeed we do, little daughter. And oh, it is such happiness to me to have you to do things with, my dear, dear child.

I had been lonely for so long before you came to me,—so long!”

Bending, she gathered Letty close in her arms and for a few moments neither spoke. Then Letty's eye fell on her unfinished letter to her little friend at home.

“I must add a postscript to Emma's letter,” she exclaimed. “She will never believe me when I tell her that I have actually seen Miss Reese again. And that she is a great English lady with a title,” she added with a gay little laugh.

CHAPTER IX

SETTLING DOWN

THE next day Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and Letty traveled down to Lyme Regis and took up their abode in the quaint, picturesque pink villa on the seashore. The house was so very old that the walls were all out of line, the ceilings were so low that the flight of stairs to the second story consisted of only ten steps and one had to dodge at the top to avoid the heavy beam that supported the upper floor. And it was like walking along the deck of a moving ship to cross the room, the floor was so uneven. Their little parlor and dining-room combined looked out on a graveled terrace with the smiling sea beyond, and their landlady prepared the most tempting and delectable meals.

Housekeeping in this fashion was altogether delightful, and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones filled Letty's heart to overflowing by entrusting her with the management of their simple meals.

Marketing in the little village was a constant source of amusement, and each day brought some little surprise or adventure. On one occasion, when the two had discussed the day's menu at the breakfast table and had decided upon a leg of mutton, Letty was received at the butcher's with the calm announcement:

"We don't 'ave mutton to-day, miss. Tuesday an' Friday's the days for mutton. To-day's veal."

So upon veal they dined. On another occasion, she entered the tiny green vegetable shop to find it empty, and after a long period of waiting, with frequent tappings on the counter to attract attention, she decided that further delay was useless. But a neighboring shopkeeper saw Letty emerging and sent a call up the street, another friendly neighbor bustled away and presently back rushed the green groceress, rosy and breathless.

"I just stepped out to buy a reel o' cotton. I 'ope I've not kept you waitin', miss. What will you 'ave? We've some very nice harti-chokes this mornin', tuppence each; nice large ones."

Letty had grown used by this time to accepting the suggestions of the green groceress, since her stock in trade was generally limited to the one or two fresh vegetables mentioned each day. But she stared in astonishment at artichokes being offered at a price which was less than one-tenth of that demanded for such a delicacy in the markets at home, and she hurried back gleefully with her bargain.

“Marketing here in Lyme Regis is like opening a prize package every day,” she laughed. “But I am sure I shall never get used to buying peas by the gallon and cream by the pound. Oh, the luscious, delicious Devonshire cream! However can we live without it when we go home again, Aunt Mary? Mrs. Bishop has promised to give me the recipe for it. Do you suppose our cook could make it? How jolly it would be to ask people in for tea and then surprise them with strawberries and Devonshire cream.”

Another charming side to housekeeping was the purchasing of fruit and fish at her own door-step. Letty would lean over the stone wall at the edge of the terrace and bargain with a peddler on the Parade below, who

stood beside his patient little donkey, which was laden with panniers of freshly gathered blackberries or huckleberries. Or with a fish-monger who offered sole fresh out of the water, spread out for inspection on a wooden tray.

With these occupations and with long hours spent idly on the warm yellow sand, or sitting with a book on the end of the Cobb, Letty managed to fill her days very happily. But it was a bit lonely sometimes by herself, for as her book progressed, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones became more and more engrossed in her work, and even the little oddities of Devonshire ways became a matter of course, while the small adventures of marketing were not nearly so amusing when there was no one to share them with. Often it happened that when she came home bubbling over with the fun of some experience, she would find Mrs. Hartwell-Jones too completely wrapped up in a chapter to be interrupted. Then Letty would take her book with a little sigh, and go down by herself to the beach.

Mr. Jack Beckwith had sent her a prettily bound copy of Jane Austen's novel "Persuasion," and Mrs. Somers a memoir of the author's

life, and it was very pleasant to read a story with the scene laid at one's very feet, so to speak. But Letty was by nature very sociably inclined, and always liked to talk over everything with a congenial friend. She wrote many long letters to all her friends, not forgetting little Anna Parsons at Hammersmith, who was fearfully proud of having a "foreign correspondent," but writing letters is not the same as talking, especially about funny things. One can't laugh very well in a letter.

There were a good many other people on the beach, and walking up and down the Parade, nice, quiet looking ladies and children. But Letty did not try to make friends with any of them, for she felt shy by herself and nervous about making new friends. So she got no further than playing now and then with some of the babies and smiling a shy good-morning to two or three of the regular daily visitors to the beach, who felt very kindly toward the quiet, lonely girl.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones appeared completely absorbed in her book, but she was not too deeply engrossed to notice Letty's loneliness and to plan to relieve it. She herself could

not give up any more time to the child, as it was necessary to put all her thought and energy into her story. A book is never really interesting and successful unless the writer has put body and soul as well as brains into it. But she provided some one else to take her place as Letty's companion.

"Letty dear," she said one morning at breakfast, looking up from a black-edged letter she was reading, "here is a letter from Mademoiselle la Grange."

"I thought it was," replied Letty. "I recognized the handwriting. And French people do use awfully broad black borders, don't they, on their letter paper?" She sighed a little as she spoke. The black-bordered envelope beside her aunt's plate was somewhat depressing. "Of course mademoiselle feels very bad over the death of her father, and we all sympathize with her, but such deep mourning is a little—well, it is apt to give one the blues, don't you think?"

"That is the deep emotional nature of the French people, dear. And they show their griefs, as well as their joys, more than we Saxon races do. But poor mademoiselle's

grief is very genuine, and she writes pathetically of being left alone."

"Poor mademoiselle! She had talked all spring of coming over to France to spend the summer with her father. She had been looking forward to it and saving her money so carefully, from the private lessons she gave. She must be very forlorn."

"She is, poor thing, and so I thought it would be rather nice, Letty dear, if we should invite her here for a little visit with us. What do you think of it?"

"Oh, I should like that, Aunt Mary! I'll do all the entertaining of her, so that she need not disturb your work," and Letty's face lighted up wonderfully at the prospect of a companion.

"Bless your dear, thoughtful heart," exclaimed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones warmly. "It is for your sake I am asking her, sweet child. I saw how lonely you were feeling, left so much to yourself, and I believe mademoiselle will make a pleasant comrade for you, as well as getting comfort for herself out of the arrangement. She writes here," referring to the letter in her hand, "that she will love dearly to

come, and wishes to give you a few lessons in French in return for my kindness."

"Oh, then you have already invited her? How nice."

"Yes, but I did not want to tell you about it until I was sure she could come, for fear of disappointing you. Oh, I have had you in mind more than you thought, dear child. You believed that I was so deep in my story that I had no eye for your wistful face and lonely hours. I am not quite so selfish as that, my precious little girl."

"Dear Aunt Mary! That is the very last thing in the world any one could think about you. You are the sweetest, dearest, thoughtfulest Aunt Mary in this wide, wide world!"

And Letty left her breakfast to run around the table and embrace her beloved aunt.

"But I was a little lonely sometimes," she admitted, "though I tried tremendously hard not to let you see it, for I didn't want to be a care or interruption to you in the slightest."

"Now, if I have mademoiselle with me, there will be ever so many nice things to do. There must be beautiful walks all about this neighborhood, but I have never gone far, for I

knew you wouldn't want me to poke about alone. Mademoiselle and I together can explore to our heart's content."

"Yes, I am sure she will be glad to go with you, for she is fond of walking, and I know that you will be perfectly safe with her."

"Will she stay here in this house with us? Is there another spare room?"

"Yes, I have spoken to Mrs. Bishop and made all the arrangements. This letter is mademoiselle's acceptance of my invitation."

"And when does she come?"

"To-morrow, by the afternoon train. Poor little mademoiselle, you will have to cheer her up, Letty. She is feeling so sad and alone in the world. Her father was the only near relative she had left."

"I'll do my best, Aunt Mary, and out-of-doors and sunshine do cheer one up a lot, don't they? Mademoiselle can't help feeling better in this glorious air."

So mademoiselle arrived, and her coming made a great difference to Letty. In the deep black of her mourning she looked so little and sad that Letty's heart went out to her at once,

and she resolved to do all she could to lighten the Frenchwoman's grief.

In her turn, mademoiselle felt so grateful to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones for her sympathy and consideration that she could not do enough to show her appreciation.

She and Letty spent many happy, happy days in the quaint little seaside village together. They strolled along the beach, or climbed the steep hills to the cliffs above. The heather was in bloom and spread in great purple masses over the moors until the very earth seemed warmed by it. Mademoiselle had brought quite a stock of amusing and pleasing stories, in simple, easy French, and these they would read aloud either seated in a fragrant bed of heather on the top of the cliff, with the beautiful, shimmering summer sea at their feet, or, if it chanced to be windy and chilly, tucked cozily under the shelter of the wall, midway down the length of the stout stone pier of the Cobb. Letty generally did the reading, mademoiselle helping her over the hard places and making the story so interesting that Letty forgot she was struggling with the complications of a foreign language.

In this way clever mademoiselle tucked in many a little lesson in grammar and composition, and by the time that month was up, Letty was in a fair way to realize the ambition she had formed on her first day of school, to be able to chatter in French, freely and easily.

Another absorbing interest that soon arose was lace-making. She and mademoiselle were examining some bits of Honiton lace displayed in a shop-window, and were much impressed by the information that it had been made by the townspeople of Lyme Regis.

The shopkeeper, who was exhibiting the wares, pleased by their interest, admitted that she herself had made two or three pieces of the lace, and got out her cushion to show them how it was done.

"Ah," exclaimed mademoiselle with brightening eyes, "I, too, used to know how to make lace upon a cushion, when I was a little thing at home with my mother."

"I have a class of children whom I teach now," responded the shopkeeper. "I love to teach them. It is surprising how quickly they get the notion of it. And how spry

their little fingers are. But when they grow older, they cease to care for it," she added with a sigh. "They grow ambitious to make money and wish to earn it faster than by this slow lace-making and so they go to work in the mills. Sometimes I fear me the business of lace-making'll die out altogether, so much of it is made nowadays by machinery."

"Ah, but nothing so dainty or exquisite could ever be made by machinery," exclaimed Letty, who was quick to see and feel beauty in every form.

"That is very true," agreed mademoiselle seriously. "That which is made with the hand requires patience and thought, as well as much time and care. It grows slowly and so develops in beauty as a thing wound off, quick, by a stupid machine, cannot be. Voila, it is like playing the piano by hand and by one of those dreadful pianola machines. The pianola plays the notes, sans doute, but quick off like a flash, brrrrt! But the fingers, they strike the notes with gentle, loving patience. They have worked hard and long to learn and to love the notes; and so they bring out the soul of the music."

The shopkeeper listened with awed respect to this little homily.

"My word," she exclaimed, "how true that is. I know that the pieces of lace that take longest to make are not only the most elaborate and bring one the most money, but I get so fond of them, while I work, that I can hardly bear to part with them sometimes, when the time comes to sell them."

"And how do you make it?" asked Letty, who had been eyeing the little square cushion and bobbins with great curiosity. "It looks very difficult to me."

"It isn't really, you know. Indeed, it's like child's play to me, I've done it so long, and I often make up a new pattern of a morning while I'm doin' the rooms or tendin' the shop."

"Have you known how to do it long?"

"All my life, miss. My mother taught me when I was a wee mite. As I say, little fingers work quick. I don't do so very much for sale now, but I'm so fond of it I always have a piece by me. See, I keep my cushion right here under the counter, so I can do a bit now and again when I'm tendin' shop. I

'ave some patterns that belonged to my mother."

Taking down a box from the shelf she displayed some long, narrow slips of very thick yellow paper, pricked close with tiny holes.

"It takes me back to my own young days," sighed mademoiselle, quite moved by the woman's enthusiasm. "I used to love the lace-making, too, only I did the Breton lace."

"Would the little lady like to learn?" suggested Mrs. Betts, the shop-woman, inspired by Letty's eager eyes and interested manner.

"I should adore it, but I could never learn. It is much too hard," and Letty put by the cushion with a regretful sigh.

"How long are you to remain here, miss? I could teach you in twenty-four lessons."

"In twenty-four! Do you really think you could? Oh, I wonder if Aunt Mary would let me learn. If I took a lesson every day I could get in twenty-four and more while we are here. Mademoiselle, I am going straight home and ask her. I should love to do it!"

"And perhaps my old knowledge would

come back and I could help you," replied mademoiselle, almost as enthusiastic as her young companion when bidding the shopkeeper a hurried adieu and promising to let her know their decision, they hurried back to their lodgings.

CHAPTER X

THE LITTLE HONITON LACE-MAKER

MRS. HARTWELL-JONES consented willingly to the new proposition, glad that Letty should be interested in such a very delightful accomplishment.

“Provided you do not let it keep you indoors too much,” she added. “I do not want any of those splendid English roses to fade, which these walks and sea breezes have made to bloom in your cheeks.”

“Ah, non, madame, I shall see to that,” promised mademoiselle. “We can take our lace-cushions with us, after the lesson, and do the work, as we have done our reading, out-of-doors.”

“But I hope that the reading is not finished?” replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones with a smile, for she had been delighted with Letty’s progress in French.

“No indeed, I am too much interested in ‘La Neuvaine de Colette’ to give it up,” an-

swered Letty gayly. "Mademoiselle is going to learn the lace-making too, Aunt Mary. She used to make Breton lace when she was a little girl, and it will be such fun to work together. Let us take turns, one reading aloud while the other works, shall we, mademoiselle?"

"That will be an excellent arrangement; then your ear will become trained as well as the tongue. It will be a great pleasure to take up the lace work," she added to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, "after all my years of tricotage."¹

Mrs. Betts was delighted with her two new pupils. She had often taught the summer visitors, but generally her pupils had gone about their lessons in a careless, flippant manner, regarding them only as a means of filling in time.

But Letty was earnestly interested and eager to learn. She very quickly acquired the knack of handling the little bobbins, and soon mastered the pattern of a simple design that Mrs. Betts had set her.

¹ Tricotage—simple crochet work, done with a long hook of uniform size, and producing a plain, straight pattern.

"This edge is very nice, and I am going to make a collar of it for Mary Beckwith's Christmas present," she confided to mademoiselle. "Indeed, it is so easy I believe I shall be able to make two or three collars in time for Christmas. But I want to learn how to do something harder, a little more elaborate pattern, for Aunt Mary's present. Oh, mademoiselle, isn't it fun making real lace! And isn't it all too lovely for anything," she added happily, "to be out here under this great, golden sky, with the blue sea at our feet and this delicious, springy heather to sit on, like a great purple throne?"

"Each month of my life, mademoiselle, it seems to me I get happier and happier. I feel as if I just couldn't be any happier, that life is just as full of blessings and good times as it can hold, and then something else happens to make it still happier.

"Aunt Mary is always thinking of and planning things for me to do, to make me comfortabler or have a good time. Mademoiselle, don't you think she is one of the best and most wonderful women that ever lived? I mean it, really; not just gushing. She

is so thoughtful, so unselfish, so sweet and generous."

"She is, ah, she is indeed!" agreed mademoiselle with fervor. "She is one of the truly great ones of the earth, ma chere, and I am glad that you appreciate her."

"But, mademoiselle, do you think she seems quite well this summer?" asked Letty, her pretty face becoming grave all at once. "I have wondered sometimes if all this isn't a good deal of a strain upon her. I mean living right here by the seashore. You know how she used to dread the sea?"

"I know, dear child, but she told me when I first came that she does not feel that way any longer. She thinks it may be because the sea here is so calm and quiet; more like a lake than a bay."

"I know. That is what she told Mrs. Somers. Still, it must make her think about the past, mademoiselle. And then I am so afraid a storm will come. I know a storm would upset her dreadfully."

"But you must not vex your tender heart with thinking about what might happen, cherie. Your good Aunt Mary would not

like that. And I do not think Mrs. Hartwell-Jones looks badly. She is absent-minded, yes, and intent upon her work. But she is neither pale nor nervous nor ill in any way. And she eats with a good appetite."

"Yes, she does that. This glorious air gives us all good appetites, doesn't it? I am as ravenous as a wolf all the time, and I am really getting quite fat. But, mademoiselle, do you think Aunt Mary could ever learn to like the sea? I love it so. I love to watch the waves come rolling in so endlessly and strong. It is splendid! And yet it does not seem fair to be fond of anything that was so cruel to dear Aunt Mary."

"Ma chere, it was not the sea which did your aunt the cruelty. It was not intended to be a cruelty at all. It was a very, very hard burden given the dear lady to bear; why, we do not know. So much that is sad and hard to bear happens in life, of which we cannot understand the meaning. We can only bear it and trust and have faith."

"Yes, to trust and have faith. That is the lesson we all must learn," repeated Letty

softly, and they were both quiet for a few moments.

The clear, far-reaching sky, the immeasurable sea and the billowy distances of moorland all about them called for big thoughts and quiet, solemn reveries.

Anything we are interested in goes rapidly, whether it is arithmetic or a new pattern in fancy work, and so Letty's knowledge of the making of Honiton lace grew rapidly, and at the end of a fortnight Mrs. Betts agreed that she was ready for another, more intricate pattern.

"I have just received a new box of laces to sell," Mrs. Betts said one morning. "You know my shop is the depot for all the lace-makers in the town. I display them in my window and the summer visitors buy some. I do not sell much. Most tourists prefer to buy from the town of Honiton itself, which is not many miles away, on the road to Exeter.

"Of course, it is all the same lace; the same process throughout all the district. But for some reason the summer visitors think it sounds grander to say they bought Honiton lace in Honiton town. However, I do a pretty good business, pretty good."

When the lesson was over she got out the box of laces and spread them on the counter for mademoiselle and Letty to look over and admire. Among the assortment there were three or four pieces which appeared of finer, better execution than the rest.

"These little bits are charming," exclaimed mademoiselle, holding them up. "They are beautifully done, and so carefully shaped. They have a distinction, n'est ce pas, Letty?"

"They are certainly different from the rest. They look as if they had been made by loving hands; as if the person who made them loved the dainty work for itself, and not for just what could be got out of it."

Mrs. Betts was so evidently pleased by their admiration and praise that Letty suspected her of having made the pieces herself, and asked her if it were not so.

"Ah, no indeed. My big, clumsy fingers could not do that, miss. But a dear little girl made it, my prize pupil—a young lady not very much older than yourself, miss."

"A summer visitor?" asked Letty, much impressed. "I am sure she must have had more than twenty-four lessons."

Mrs. Betts laughed.

"You are not becoming discouraged over your progress, I 'ope, miss?" she said cheerily. "For you have got on faster in the time than any pupil I've ever 'ad. Quite astonishin' fast for a beginner.

"As for these bits of lace, they are not made by an amateur at all, but by a little girl in the village, who has been making the lace these eight or nine years past, ever since 'er little fingers could first work the bobbins."

"How interesting! It is lovely work for her to have; she must take great pleasure in it."

"She does, miss, and it's a blessing she enjoys it," replied the shopkeeper with a little sigh, "for it's little else she gets to give her pleasure."

"Is she so very poor?" asked Letty curiously.

The woman's tone as she spoke was so sorrowful and sympathetic that it roused her interest in the little Honiton lace-maker. She felt as if perhaps there might be a story connected with her history.

"Yes, she is poor, miss; very poor, you would call it. But it isn't that that calls up

my pity for her, whenever her name's spoke. The poor child is lame, miss."

"Oh, the poor little girl, I am so sorry!" exclaimed Letty softly, and mademoiselle uttered a quick little exclamation of sympathy.

"Ah, you may well say so, miss," answered Mrs. Betts heartily. "I dare say she'd give up all her skill at the lace-making for a day's run on the firm ground."

"How did it happen? Has she always been so?" asked mademoiselle, "or was it an accident?"

"They think it must have happened when she was a baby. The lameness just appeared and grew worse."

"Oh, dear, how sorry I am for her," exclaimed Letty again, wondering how she could ever bear it if anything should happen to cause her the loss of her freedom. "I wish there was something we could do for her, mademoiselle. I am going to ask Aunt Mary if I may buy these pieces of lace. I want some to take home for presents and I should like to get these, if Aunt Mary does not think it too extravagant."

"The price is very moderate; very, for the

amount of work," put in the shopkeeper in her most businesslike tones.

"Oh, I know that. I think it very moderate indeed, now that I understand something about the making myself and realize how much patience and care the simplest pattern takes. I meant that I must ask my aunt if she thinks it would be too extravagant for me to spend my money for this lace. I should like to buy all of the little lame girl's pieces, for I am sure it would please her to know that the lace she had worked so hard over had been appreciated and bought, and that she had not worked in vain."

"Indeed it would gratify her, miss, for they are poor folk, as I said, and every penny counts. An' she likes to feel that she's doin' a bit to 'elp along, poor child."

"Then I'll see," replied Letty, laying the dainty bits of lace carefully back in the box; "but, Mrs. Betts, if any one else admires the lace and offers to buy it, don't lose the chance. You might be able to get a better price for it."

As she and mademoiselle left the shop, they discussed the little lame lace-maker.

"Oh, dear," sighed Letty, giving a little hop, skip and jump to assure herself that her own limbs were sound, "how dreadful it must be not to have the use of one's legs. Just suppose, mademoiselle, that the telephone should ring, or Aunt Mary call from up-stairs, I couldn't even jump up to answer her—not to mention missing all the glorious walks and runs and dancing!"

"It is truly dreadful. I felt that, dearie, when I was a prisoner with my foolish sprained ankle last spring. That horrible sprain that shut me up in the high third story where you supposed me to be at the so terrible fire. Oh, my Letty, my Letty, what a brave child you were that day! Never shall I forget what you did for me then, never! Ah, it hurts to think of it!" And the emotional little Frenchwoman stopped short in the street and covered her face with her hands, serenely unconscious that the passers-by were staring at her curiously.

"Isn't the lady feeling well, miss?" asked a passing market woman kindly, pausing with her basket on her hip. "Can I help you?"

Mademoiselle looked up in surprise at the question.

"I thank you, I am feeling quite well," she replied quickly. "It was only some sad thoughts that overcame me. Thank you, madame.

"I quite forgot that I am not still in my own dear country," she added to Letty as they walked hurriedly on, "where one may show what one feels without appearing awkward or ashamed. Ah, well, we were speaking about the little lame girl, n'est ce pas?"

Mademoiselle spoke in French, as she so often did when with Letty nowadays, and Letty was proud to find how easily she understood. When speaking English with her intimates, mademoiselle was apt, if very much moved or interested, to break off into French in the middle of her narrative and sometimes, in going over the conversation afterward in her mind, Letty could not be sure when the transition had occurred, so that she felt that her understanding, at least, of the French language had improved.

But she did not often reply in French, unless a conversation in that tongue had been

agreed upon beforehand ; she still spoke slowly and falteringly, and floundered sadly among the verbs.

“ Yes, the poor little lame lace-maker,” she answered in English. “ I was just wondering, mademoiselle, which of our senses it would be least unbearable to do without. I have always thought it would be most dreadful of all to be blind. But when I think of what it would mean not to be able to move about ; always to sit in one chair where one had been put, perhaps in pain most of the time, oh, dear, it is too sad to think of on such a magnificent, walk-y day !

“ Let's not settle down to lace work and reading this morning, mademoiselle, but take a holiday and walk and walk and walk. Do you feel equal to it ? Up the hill here, past the railway station and along the top of the cliffs until we come to a path down, and then go home along the beach. May we ?

“ I should like to play ‘ Lady Bountiful ’ to that poor little lame girl,” she added after a pause. “ The thought of her haunts me. I am sure she must suffer, mademoiselle. When we get back to the house I am going to ask

Aunt Mary if we may go to see her some time. We could take her some books to read, or perhaps some fruit. Will you go with me?"

"With pleasure, ma chere. It is always a joy to bring happiness into other people's lives."

CHAPTER XI

A HOUSE PARTY

LETTY would no doubt have remembered to ask her Aunt Mary about the proposed visit to the little lame lace-maker if something had not happened to put the whole matter out of her head for the time being. When they got back to their lodgings in Mrs. Bishop's villa, "The Bishop's Palace," Letty had laughingly dubbed the tiny house, they found letters awaiting them.

Letty's was from Clara Markham, containing a very urgent invitation to Letty to come to spend the next week-end with her cousin, Lady Anvers, and herself at the former's country place, Dorfield House.

"Cousin Dorothy has decided suddenly to go to Switzerland next week to visit friends, and is going to take me with her," wrote Clara. "We shall be gone at least a month, possibly six weeks, and I am afraid to put off

your visit to us until after that time, for fear either you or Mary Beckwith, if not both, might be gone back home, and so our promised good time lost."

The letter was a long one, very cordial and very urgent. Letty read it through eagerly and then handed it across to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, who was watching her with smiling eyes.

"I know what is in the letter, dear," she said, taking it, "for I have had one from Lady Anvers herself."

"Oh," exclaimed Letty, "and may I go? Do you suppose it could be arranged?"

"I thought you were 'so absolutely and perfectly contented' here," answered Mrs. Hartwell-Jones teasingly, quoting one of Letty's own expressions; Letty was apt to be a little extravagant sometimes in her efforts to express her feelings.

"But I am, Aunt Mary! It is all perfect here, and lovely and jolly. But——"

"But what, you artful dodger? There there," she added laughing as Letty looked somewhat abashed, "of course you are anxious to see your friends and have a visit with Clara

and her cousin. It is perfectly natural and we shall arrange it somehow."

"Now that mademoiselle is here to keep you company you won't be lonely, will you, Aunt Mary? I am invited for only a few days."

"No, I shall not be lonely at all, dear, except that I always miss my little girl when she is away from me," responded Mrs. Hartwell-Jones tenderly. "And now listen, dear, to my plan. Or, suppose we go down-stairs. I heard mademoiselle go down just now, and we can discuss the matter all together at the lunch table."

"I, too, had some interesting news in my mail this morning," Mrs. Hartwell-Jones continued, when they were assembled about the small lunch table and mademoiselle had been acquainted with Letty's invitation. "I had a circular from Liberty's, notifying me that their famous July sales are about to begin. I have always heard of their great July reduction sales, and what bargains one can get, so I have resolved to give story writing a rest and take up shopping for relaxation."

"We three will journey up to London to-

gether—that is, if you feel equal to the little jaunt, mademoiselle? Mrs. Bishop will keep our rooms and our luggage for us here, and while you are visiting at a grand English country house, Letty dear, mademoiselle and I will be comfortably settled in our little private hotel shopping and sightseeing. We shall all be the better for a little liveliness, I think.”

“Oh, what fun, what fun!” exclaimed Letty, clapping her hands. “You always do make things happen in the most delightful way, Aunt Mary. You are a regular fairy godmother. And may I write an acceptance to Clara at once?”

“By all means, and as there may be two or three little things needed to freshen your wardrobe for a fashionable visit, I propose that we go up to London to-morrow, so as to have a day or two of shopping before you go to Dorfield House.”

“Then I must fly around and tell Mrs. Betts that I can’t take another lesson for several days. I shall have to work doubly hard when I get back, to make up for this holiday,” laughed Letty. “But I’ll write to Clara first, so as to catch the afternoon mail.”

The next day the three went up to London and settled themselves in the quiet little hotel where Letty and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had spent such a happy two weeks at the beginning of the summer, and after a day or two of delightful flitting about to the different shops, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones pronounced Letty equipped for her visit to an English country house.

Mary Beckwith came up from Brighton, where her father and mother were staying for a few weeks, and Letty and she started off for Dorfield House together. As Lady Anvers had said, the railway journey was very short and very pleasant, passing through the beautiful Kent valley where the wide fields of hops made the countryside look like a Biblical vineyard. A short hour and a half brought them to Evebrook, the railway station for Dorfield House, and Clara Markham was on the platform to meet them, in true American fashion.

"Oh, girls, isn't this jolly!" exclaimed Clara as she greeted them. "I'm so glad to see you, and so glad you could both come now. Cousin Dorothy wanted to ask one or

two English girls to make up a house party, but I thought it would be more fun just by ourselves, so they are just coming in for dinner to-night and again to-morrow afternoon for tennis. They are awfully nice girls, really, just as jolly as all of us at home, and not a bit poky, as I always used to have an idea English girls would be."

"Mary and I made friends with a very nice English girl at the hotel in London. She was as friendly as could be, wasn't she, Mary, and not a bit poky," said Letty. "Oh, what a pretty village!"

"Yes, isn't it quaint? Do you see those old, old houses over there, facing the green?"

"Those odd, brown-looking ones? What are they made of?"

"That is cork. The whole fronts of the houses are faced with sheets of carved cork. Isn't that a droll idea?" answered Clara. "This lane where we are turning off is a short cut to Dorfield House. You can reach it by the highroad, too, and drive in through the park. But this way is shorter, and much prettier, I think."

Half a mile through the pretty winding

lane brought them out, quite unexpectedly, in sight of the house. It was a large house, built around three sides of a square courtyard, and was of brick, soft-toned and mellowed with years into the rich, brownish tint that makes old English houses so attractive. A broad carriage drive swept up in a great semicircle to the central door and on the other side, a wide expanse of smooth, velvety lawn stretched away until it met and blended with the wooded dells of the park.

"Oh, how lovely!" sighed Mary and Letty together.

"No wonder you like to come over to England to spend every summer with your cousin, Clara," added Mary. "It must be like living in a story."

"It is nice, isn't it?" replied Clara simply. "The gardens and tennis-court are at the back. Now, here we are, and here is Cousin Dorothy at the door to say 'howdy.'"

"To say a great deal more than 'howdy,'" laughed Lady Anvers, catching the last part of the sentence as the carriage drew up before the open door. "I am so very glad to see you, girlyes! Now, do you want to go to

your rooms to prink a bit, or shall we come right in and have tea?"

"Oh, let's have tea, by all means, please. I'm sure the girls don't want to do any prinking, and I'm anxious to show them over the house," cried Clara impatiently.

"Well, come into the morning room, then. I ordered tea in there, as it is so much cozier," and Lady Anvers led the way into a large, bright room, done up in gay patterned chintzes and filled with big, easy chairs and low tables, loaded with magazines and books of the day. A few old prints hung on the walls and everywhere stood photographs in handsome frames, giving the room a homey, lived-in air.

But in spite of the coziness and informality of it all, Letty and Mary felt a little shy and awkward.

Mary Beckwith was not naturally shy, but she had never met Lady Anvers before and, moreover, Letty's extreme bashfulness was catching. To begin with, in the old days, Letty had not known Lady Anvers, or "Miss Reese," as she was then, and as Letty still continued to think of her, very well. Indeed, there had been no equality in their acquaint-

ance then, for Letty, a little mite of nine, had looked up to her mother's benefactress with worshipful awe, as a real Lady Bountiful. Furthermore, the very fact that she was experiencing such a story-bookish event as a visit at an English country house, for which certain important shopping had been considered necessary, overpowered Letty.

Therefore, it took more than a cup of tea and hot toasted muffins to break the ice of reserve that threatened to freeze up the little company, and just as Lady Anvers was wishing privately that she had invited the two or three English girls she had thought of, for the relief of numbers, the very best ice-breaker of all appeared on the scene.

A door at the end of the room opened and a small child, about three years old, appeared on the threshold, clinging to the hand of a rosy-cheeked, elderly woman. She was as dainty as a fairy in her white frock and blue sash, with her golden curls falling over her shoulders and her fat, dimpled knees bare down to the sky-blue socks. With a merry shout she dropped her nurse's hand and charged down the room, crying :

“Dey’ve come; dey’ve come!”

She kissed her mother and Clara and then, with roguish smiles and a gay friendliness of manner quite irresistible, she lifted her flower-like mouth to Letty and Mary each to kiss. Such charming confidence carried them completely away, and in two minutes all four girls, big and little, were chattering volubly, and shyness and strangeness were forgotten.

A merry hour ensued and then Clara insisted upon conducting her visitors upon a tour of inspection over the house.

“The house is centuries old, you know, girls. One part was built before America was discovered. And there are ghost stories and all sorts of interesting histories connected with it. In the banqueting hall, which Cousin Dorothy uses as a drawing-room because the new dining-room, added in the eighteenth century, is so much brighter and more convenient, well, the floor in the big banqueting hall was taken up for repairs, or to lay electric wires or something a few years ago, and the workmen found gold coins of Charles the First’s time. It is supposed that they slipped down between the cracks of the floor when the gay gentle-

men of that day were gambling. I wonder how they ever got their accounts straightened out? Here is the room. Isn't it stunning?"

As she spoke, Clara threw open a door and Mary and Letty caught their breath in admiration and surprise. It was a spacious chamber, with vaulted roof supported by rough-hewn, carved beams of black oak. A narrow gallery ran across the lower end, with a low balustrade. All the woodwork was black with age and beautifully carved, and the handsome stone fireplaces, of which there were two, with high carved chimney shelves, were almost large enough for the girls to stand upright within them.

"Even if there were no furnaces in those days, I am sure these fireplaces must have kept the people warm," laughed Letty.

"Only I'm afraid it would be like in 'The Cloister and the Hearth,' where they warmed one side at a time, first the back, then the front," added Mary. "Can't you picture a magnificent banquet going on in here, girls, with the men all in gorgeous costumes or maybe armor, and musicians playing, there in

the gallery? Oh, Clara, no wonder you were crazy to show us the house. More, please."

There were all sorts of delightful and surprising rooms and corridors, up-stairs and down; for the house had been added to at various periods and Letty and Mary felt quite bewildered and lost when at last Clara led them to a wide, long hall, lighted by a large casement window at the end, saying:

"Here are your rooms, girls, right alongside mine."

"And I am here, just over the way, if you need anything or feel badly in the night," added Lady Anvers appearing in a doorway opposite. "A few neighbors are coming in for dinner and we'll all meet down-stairs at a few minutes before eight."

Little Dorothy was coaxed away from her new friends with some difficulty and the girls proceeded to dress in a breeze of happy excitement.

The evening was delightful and ended up with charades and a gay little supper. Next day was quite as full of interesting good times as it could be crammed, and the tennis party proved to be a delightful success.

Letty was charmed with the gardens, of which there were several, and she could not decide which pleased her most, the rose—or the vegetable—garden.

“I am sure I never saw so many roses in my life,” she said to Lady Anvers as they walked up and down the winding paths together amidst a wealth of fragrant bloom, in colors from deepest crimson to palest cream tints, “nor so many different kinds. It is simply wonderful. But I love the vegetable garden, too. It is so attractive to see the borders of pretty, hardy flowers around the different vegetable beds. It is like—like—I don’t know how to say it exactly, but it makes me feel that the beautiful things of life were all mixed up with the homely, workaday ones. That——”

“That one did not have to put on one’s best dress and sit in a rose garden, in order to get at the beauty of life,” suggested Lady Anvers as Letty stopped, unable to express her meaning.

“Exactly. Thank you for putting it so nicely for me. And do you know, Lady Anvers, that is what my Aunt Mary is like.

Please don't laugh, for she is, like a big, neat kitchen garden bordered with pretty flowers. She is always supplying me with the homely little necessities and comforts of life, but always with a posy tucked in."

"You are very happy with your 'Aunt Mary,' aren't you, dear?" said Lady Anvers softly. "I am so glad, sweet child. How happy your mother would be, if she could see her little daughter now."

Letty turned with her eyes full of tears.

"Oh, Miss Ree—I mean, Lady Anvers, mayn't we have a long talk about my mother? It is so sweet to see some one again who knew her."

"We shall indeed have a nice long talk, Letty dear. I should enjoy it, too. But see, the girls are calling you now, so run away and have a gay time."

On Sunday Sir George and Lady Anvers, the three girls, and Dorothy, the latter feeling very important among so many big girls, walked across the Common to the picturesque stone church, which stood in the midst of its quiet churchyard, overlooking an exquisite pastoral scene. Letty enjoyed the simple serv-

ice and joined the singing with all her heart, quite unconscious that her voice had attracted the attention, not only of her host and hostess, but of a good many of the congregation as well.

As soon as they reached home again Lady Anvers sat down at her piano in the magnificent big drawing-room that had been a banquet hall, and playing over the tune of a well-known hymn, asked Letty to sing it.

"We are very fond of music, dear, and we noticed your voice in church. Have you been studying?"

"Not yet, but I am to begin lessons this fall, I hope," replied Letty, and sang the hymn through feelingly, for it was one of her favorites.

Again and again she sang, her fresh, true young voice ringing out and up through the big, vaulted space. It was an inspiring room in which to sing, and her little audience were as still and absorbed as the greatest singer could wish. Even small Dorothy fell under the spell.

"Oh, you dear child, your voice is beautiful!" exclaimed Lady Anvers at last. "You

know your mother confided to me that she hoped some day you would know how to sing. Come, let us talk," and she led Letty away to a quiet corner.

At tea time quite a number of people from a neighboring country house, who were entertaining a big week-end party, dropped in on the way home from a walk, and an extempore concert was held. Letty sang again and again, and received such extravagant praise that it embarrassed her. Indeed, she came nearer to the danger of having her head turned that evening than she had ever been before in her life.

Next day the delightful house party broke up, and Letty and Mary took the train back to London, with many expressions of thanks on their part and of hope on the part of Lady Anvers that this visit might be the first of many more.

"And you know we are coming over to America in the winter for a visit," she added, "so we shall surely all meet again."

"And I'm doin', too," announced small Dorothy gleefully, "doin' on a big, big s'ip wif an engine inside to mate it do, an' you'll

sing ' Ve Owl an' ve Pussy Tat ' to me adain, won't you, Letty ? ”

“ Oh, I am so glad you are coming,” cried Letty eagerly, “ for now you will meet Aunt Mary again and know her better. Yes, Dorothy, I'll sing ' The Owl and the Pussy Cat ' as many times as you ask me, and lots of other songs, too. Good-bye, every one. I wish I could say thank you enough. It has all been so beautiful.”

And after they had got into the carriage to drive to the station, Letty ran back for one more peep at the beautiful old banqueting hall, to sit in which had made her feel like the heroine of an old-time novel.

CHAPTER XII

AN AFTERNOON VISIT

LIFE did seem a bit dull and commonplace at Lyme Regis after her gay, pleasant experience, but Letty settled down cheerfully enough and enlivened the present by living over again the past week in her memory and talking over her visit with mademoiselle and her Aunt Mary.

“It was such a lovely old house, Aunt Mary, with funny little flights of stairs in places where you never in the world would expect them. And oh, how I wish you could have seen that splendiferous big room with its vaulted ceiling! Such wonderful carving and such black oak, hundreds and hundreds of years old, you know. And a perfect room to sing in,” she added with a sigh.

“I wish I could have heard you sing in it,” replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, secretly believing the grandest of concert rooms none too grand for her little girl’s voice.

"And the gardens were so beautiful," went on Letty rapturously. "The rose garden almost went beyond my imagination. It was filled with thousands and thousands and thousands of roses."

"Ah, that is what I should have liked," sighed mademoiselle. "The beautiful roses! But one cannot sigh for roses here, where there are so many and so lovely. How my heart rejoices in the flowers here, madame," she added, turning to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. "Do you not think it remarkable that they should grow so large?"

"Do you remember the big fuchsia tree outside that house at the top of the hill?" asked Letty. "I wrote Emma Haines about that, and she would not believe that it reached to the second story. So I have sent her a kodak of it."

"Did you not take any pictures at Dorfield House, Letty?" asked Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. "I know you took your camera, but perhaps you were too busy?"

"Indeed, no. I took three films and left them to be developed at Evebrook. I was not going to say anything to you until they

came, so as to surprise you. I only hope they will turn out well. It will be such fun to show them to you when they come."

The first three or four days after their return to Lyme Regis were rainy, and that made the contrast to Letty's gay visit all the greater, for the seaside village was essentially an out-of-door place, and when the weather prevented sitting on the beach or walking over the cliffs, there was not much left to do in the way of amusement.

To be sure, there was the daily marketing, which continued to be a source of amusement, and the lessons in lace-making proved a splendid diversion.

"I must work harder than ever, to make up for my whole week lost," Letty declared, repeating the resolve she had made before their departure for London, and early on the morning after their return she set out.

Putting on rubber overshoes and her gabardine she tramped down the deserted, sloppy Parade, around into the quaint village street, past the corner of the curio shop, which was a veritable curio itself for age and coloring, and up the steep main street to Mrs. Betts's

shop. There, while her nimble fingers flew among the bobbins, Letty entertained Mrs. Betts with accounts of her wonderful three-days' visit at Dorfield House, much impressing that estimable woman.

"And to think of those gold pieces lyin' there ever since the days of King Charles," commented the thrifty Mrs. Betts, "when they might as well 'ave been gatherin' interest in a savings bank."

"And now, Mrs. Betts," went on Letty, "as soon as the rain stops, I want to go to call on the little lame lace-maker you told me about. You have not forgotten, have you, that you promised to tell me her name and address?"

"I'll do better than that, miss, if you'll be wantin' to go within the next day or two. I'll go along with you, for I've a bit of money to take her. Yes, miss, I've sold some of the pieces you an' the French lady admired. I 'ope you're not disappointed? You told me to, you mind, if I 'ad a customer. It was a motor party, stoppin' the night at the 'Three Cups,' an' the ladies bought a number of pieces. Two of 'em was them as Violet had worked."



IT WAS A MOTOR PARTY

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"Is the little lame girl's name Violet?"

"Yes, miss, an' it just suits 'er, to my thinkin'. She's quiet an' sweet an'—an' flower-like, you know, miss."

Letty's lesson was finished and she rose, saying:

"I am very anxious to meet her. Shall we go on the first bright day? And mademoiselle may come too, may she not? She could not come to-day because she had such a dreadful headache."

"Ah, the poor lady. That will be the noise of the London streets. They do say they're some noisy. Yes, miss, the first fine day, which will be to-morrow, I fancy, for the rain has gone on long enough."

The next day was not pleasant, but the following one was, and after her lace lesson, which was in the afternoon, Letty and mademoiselle set out, in company with Mrs. Betts, who left her shop, to Letty's intense amusement, in charge of the tiniest caretaker ever was. She was a little mite of seven, the child of a neighbor, and one of Mrs. Betts's pupils. She climbed up on a high stool behind the counter and perched there, as grave and

serious as a little old judge, with her lace cushion before her.

“Think of that baby knowing how to make this wonderful lace,” exclaimed Letty aside to mademoiselle, “and intending to ‘mind shop’ at the same time! Why, she isn’t a bit bigger than Emma Haines’s sister Tottie.”

Their way led up the main street of the town; literally “up,” for it ascended at a very sharp angle, “almost the angle at which we were taught to hold our books in reading class,” laughed Letty, who was in a particularly joyous mood. The street was lined on either side with shops, like those in any small town, and there was no hint of the seashore being so close at hand.

Almost at the top of the street, just where the hill was steepest, Mrs. Betts stopped short. Letty thought she had paused to take breath, for they were all breathing rather heavily, in spite of the excellent training of country tramps. But to her surprise, the shopwoman turned and conducted them down a narrow passage. It was rather dark in the passage, and Letty wondered what or where in the world it could be leading to. If there had

been a door opening on the street, she would have supposed it the passage inside somebody's house, for it was built of wood, painted a dull, gray-green.

But before she could ask any questions they emerged, suddenly and surprisingly, upon a most charming little courtyard. It was paved in flagstones, but all around the edges were borders of gay colored flowers blooming profusely. Over the gray stone wall of the house facing them, a superb rose-vine clambered, spreading its sprays tenderly across the dull gray stones, and in front of the low doorway grew a magnificent fuchsia tree, hung thick with the vivid red bells of its blossoms.

All of this Letty took in at a glance, but her attention was caught and held by the sight of a girl, presumably about her own age, who was sitting at one side of the fuchsia tree, where the sun gleamed like copper upon the waving masses of her leaf-brown hair. Letty knew at once that this was the little lame lace-maker they had come to see, because of the lace cushion resting upon the girl's knees.

The girl was not working, but was leaning back listlessly in her chair, watching with

wistful brown eyes a thrush that perched upon the topmost branch of the fuchsia tree and sang a pæan of rejoicing over his freedom and the beauty of the world. She was a pretty girl, in spite of the pallor and thinness of her cheeks and in spite, too, of the ugly frock of dull gray wool that hunched awkwardly at the shoulders.

Her expression was only half-interested as she turned at the sound of approaching footsteps, for she did not think it was any one coming to see her. Her mother had frequent visitors; neighbors were constantly dropping in to gossip over the lace-making or knitting. But what they had to say seldom interested the lame girl. Her chief bits of pleasure were the times Mrs. Betts called to report that another bit of lace had been sold, and to hear the nice things the summer visitors—for they were always summer visitors or passing motorists who bought the lace—had to say in praise of her skill and taste. And those were Mrs. Betts's footsteps approaching now. But there were others with her, and the lame girl wondered idly who they could be.

As Mrs. Betts and her two companions

stepped into the courtyard, Violet stared at Letty with as much interest and curiosity as Letty stared at her. Mrs. Betts had crossed the small courtyard and was introducing the visitors before Violet had recovered her presence of mind.

She smiled shyly at Letty and the foreign lady, and then called, in a sweet, high voice :

“Mother, mother, come out, please. We have visitors.”

Out bustled a dark-haired, buxom woman of forty, drying her hands hastily on her gingham apron as she came, then untying the apron and casting it behind her to regions within, revealing another apron, of snowy white, beneath.

“Mrs. Moore,” said Mrs. Betts, “here is a young lady pupil that I’ve brought to call on your Violet. Miss Letty Grey, Mrs. Moore, and Mademoiselle La Grange. And here is Violet, Miss Letty. The little lady wants to talk lace-making with you, Violet, for I’ve shown her some of your pieces, and she’s that interested.”

“Do you like learning how to make lace ?” asked Violet shyly of Letty. “Here is an-

other chair, if you don't mind pulling it a bit nearer."

"Bless the young lady, she must not be asked to do that," interposed Mrs. Moore, bustling up. "I'll put the chair, Violet, and fetch more for the rest of us. There, it's nice and shady here, and if you'll all kindly sit and rest yourselves I'll fetch the tea. The kettle is on the boil."

Good Mrs. Moore was quite taken aback by this sudden accession of visitors, and the presentation of a foreign lady quite tied her voluble tongue.

"Did the young lady really call to see our Violet?" she asked in a flattered aside of Mrs. Betts. "That's sweet of her. It'll tone Violet up to have a visitor her own age, won't it? Will the lady sit down?" she added aloud, looking hesitatingly at mademoiselle.

That lady smiled and answered graciously in her excellent English, whereat Mrs. Moore instantly looked vastly relieved.

"My word!" she exclaimed delightedly. "I am glad you speak our tongue, for I don't know one word of the French, for all we live so near the country of it," she added with a

laugh, "just a bit of water separatin' us, as you may say." And she laughed again.

Mrs. Moore's manner was so hearty and her laugh so infectious that every one felt at ease immediately, and Letty and Violet were soon chattering animatedly over the engrossing subject of making Honiton lace. Mrs. Moore bustled about until she was sure that every one was comfortable and then said again, in her hospitable way :

"If the ladies will kindly excuse me for three or four minutes I'll go draw the tea, and we can have it out here all together and be sociable. I have the kettle on the hob, and was about cutting the bread and butter when you called."

It was a very cozy tea-party, indeed, for Mrs. Moore's delight in entertaining such distinguished guests was very evident, and she brought out her very best china, a really valuable set which had belonged to her husband's grandmother. She would have liked to take the ladies indoors and seat them about a table, covered with the priceless cloth of Honiton lace Violet had worked for her ; but she knew Violet's sensitiveness about her lameness, and

could not bear to suggest a change that would compel the child to use her crutches and exhibit her weakness to this other girl. So she dressed the plain black tray as daintily as possible, spread it with a fresh white cloth, and gave a finishing touch of festivity by placing upon it a small vase of fuchsias.

"That is Violet's idea," she explained to the callers. "We always do it."

"I feel as if I could drink my tea with a better taste when I have a posy on the tray," Violet explained, blushing quite pink at thus being called into notice.

"Bless the child, I never knew any one so fond of posies," added Mrs. Moore warmly. "Even in winter she has her window boxes full of bright blossoms. And everything seems to bloom for our Violet."

"It is because I have so much time to tend the flowers, mother," answered Violet with a tinge of sadness in her voice.

"I don't believe it is altogether the time they take," exclaimed Letty quickly. "It's a gift. My Aunt Mary has it. I started some window boxes at home last spring, and I am sure I gave them time and attention enough,

but they just wouldn't do well, for some reason. I had had an accident and burned my hand, so I couldn't go to school for a little while, and Aunt Mary thought the flowers would give me something to amuse me. Then, when I started in school again, and got awfully busy, Aunt Mary took charge of the window boxes, and they seemed to feel the difference. They perked up and began to bloom right away."

"I tell Violet she only needs to poke a stick in the ground and it comes up a flower," said Mrs. Moore proudly.

"How did you hurt your hand?" asked Violet of Letty with keen curiosity.

She had seen mademoiselle's significant little gesture when Letty spoke of an accident, and scented a story.

"Oh, it was nothing," answered Letty quickly. "Our school caught fire and I—I burned my hand a little getting out of the window, that's all."

"Ah, but it is not all, *ma chere*," exclaimed mademoiselle impulsively. "She burned the poor little hand, and nearly lost her precious life trying to save me—miserable me!"

Then, amid exclamations of curiosity and admiration from her audience, mademoiselle related the story of the fire at Miss Sims's school, and how Letty had believed the French teacher shut up in her own room on the third floor with a sprained ankle and had run up to warn her, although she knew that the fire was on that floor. Mademoiselle told the story feelingly, dramatically, for she had never forgotten Letty's act of heroism on her behalf, and a discussion of the incident always thrilled her afresh.

"Oh, how splendid! I should like to have done a thing like that," exclaimed Violet. "Aren't you very proud, Miss Grey?"

Letty laughed shyly, overcome by embarrassment at such ardent admiration.

"Mademoiselle is so absurdly grateful for something I did not really do—for she wasn't in her room after all, you know, but away visiting friends—that she has made it seem more than it was."

"Ah, no, ah, no," protested mademoiselle, rising as she spoke, for it was growing late, "I have not done her heroism half justice—not half."

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Letty rose too, and held out her hand.

"May I come again?" she asked. "You won't mind showing me the pattern we talked about?"

"I'll be only too glad to show you. I'd do anything to get you to come again," replied Violet eagerly.

"Thank you. Then I'll come very soon. I think it dear and sweet in here. It is so picturesque."

Mrs. Moore glowed at the praise of her simple home.

"It is Violet who has made it so nice. All the ideas of the flowers are hers. Good-bye, mam'selle. Good-bye, miss. Do come again soon. We'll be that pleased to see you."

"Oh, we certainly shall," replied Letty heartily. "This is to be only 'au revoir,' as mademoiselle says, until we meet again."

CHAPTER XIII

LETTERS FROM HOME

MRS. HARTWELL-JONES, mademoiselle and Letty were all assembled on the quaint little graveled terrace in front of their villa, reading letters from home.

Letty had several and was enjoying them immensely, for she always took a keen interest in the affairs of her friends. Every few moments she would read out to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones some amusing happening, or interesting item of home news.

"Here is such a funny letter from Anna Parsons," she said at length. "I oughtn't to call it funny, I suppose, for it's really rather sad. She is so disappointed that Jane and Christopher did not go to Sunnycrest after all this year, and she writes about Punch and Judy as if they were people instead of ponies."

"Does she say how her mother is?" asked Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, patiently putting aside

her own letters to show sufficient interest in Letty's.

"She says she is well again, or would be if the summer boarders weren't so fussy. They are always wanting things that Mrs. Parsons hasn't got and ask to have their meals at queer hours.

"She says there are two little girls, but they are too 'stuck up' to play with her, and poor Anna has to take her doll things and play out by the wood-pile."

"Poor child! When you answer her letter, dear, tell her she may drive Punch and Judy, if her father approves. Anna is surely old enough now to be trusted with such tame ponies. And perhaps when the little summer visitors see that she has such charming play-things, they may make up and try to be friends with her."

"Well, if they do, I hope Anna will snub them properly and never take them out in the pony carriage," answered Letty vindictively. "That will punish them as they deserve."

For Letty considered that Punch and Judy were quite the two most remarkable ponies that ever lived, and a drive behind them the greatest privilege.

"Dear child, be more charitable," Mrs. Hartwell-Jones reproved her gently, and took up her own letters again.

Letty opened another envelope, and complete silence reigned for a time, then Mrs. Hartwell-Jones interrupted in her turn.

"This letter is from Mrs. Emlin," she said to mademoiselle. "You know she is taking charge of the settlement work while Mrs. Somers is abroad. She writes that that celebrated Austrian doctor, the surgeon who has performed such wonderful cures, is in New York. He has been in America for several months, you know, out West."

"Yes. I have seen accounts of his lectures and operations in the newspapers."

"Well, he has begun a series of lectures in New York, and Mrs. Emlin invited him to speak at the Settlement House. You know he performs a certain number of operations free of charge, as a sort of demonstration, and lucky are the mothers who can secure his services. I understand he has never failed."

"What sort of operations does he perform?" asked Letty, much interested.

"He cures hip trouble, dear, and has

actually caused the bone to set properly and heal in children who were born with the trouble. And what I started to say was that Mrs. Emlin writes that she has got Dr.—Dr.—(she referred to her letter to be sure of the name) Dr. Heinrich interested in the case of little Mary Evans. Do you remember the child whose mother brought her to the nursery last winter, Letty? The little lame girl?"

"Yes, indeed. Such a patient little soul!"

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones paused in her story to explain the incident to mademoiselle.

"She was such a pretty child," she said, "and had always been particularly healthy, her mother told me, until this accident. One evening the child ran out into the kitchen of the boarding-house where they lived, to speak to her mother, who was helping the landlady. The door into the passage was closed and in the dark Mary turned too soon, and plunged headlong down the steep cellar stairs. Her hip was dislocated, and although they did what they could for it, the doctor they called in was not skilful, and the child grew more and more lame and helpless.

"Her mother had to go out to work each day and it was the same old story of locking the child in their one room and leaving her there alone, day after day. The child fretted and pined so in her loneliness that she grew rapidly worse. Then some one told Mrs. Evans about our day nursery, and she brought her to us. The child has been ever so much better, and certainly happier. And I have always believed that she could be cured if she had the right sort of treatment.

"Now, Dr. Heinrich has promised to operate. How anxious I shall be to hear the result. Think what a difference in her life it will make to that poor Mrs. Evans, to have her little girl strong and well again!"

"What a wonderful doctor he must be, Aunt Mary," exclaimed Letty. "I wish he could treat Violet Moore—the little lame lace-maker, you know," she explained as Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, whose mind was on her letter, looked puzzled.

"Yes, poor child, I wish he might. It is tragic to think how many, many children there are who might profit by such skill. But I can see that something else is on your mind,

childie, that you are dying to tell me. What is it?"

"I hate to keep interrupting you, Aunt Mary, and it is very interesting about the great doctor, but I have a letter from Emma Haines, and she has such good news. She writes that Mr. Goldberg came to see her and told her that if she knew a certain amount of shorthand by fall, and was quick at it, he would engage her as his secretary and stenographer. Isn't that fine? Just think of being only sixteen and able to earn your own living. She has all sorts of plans for herself and Tottie, she writes."

"I am very glad indeed. Emma deserves to get on. Has she much more to learn, do you know?"

"She says," replied Letty, referring to the letter, "that she is sure she can learn enough; that she is studying night and day, and that Miss Turner lets her use the typewriter at the Settlement House. Emma says that sometimes, when Miss Turner wants to go out, she copies out the letters for her, for practice, and addresses envelopes. She says typewriting is great fun."

"I know that Emma has made herself very useful at the Settlement House this summer, and Mrs. Emlin writes that she is sure to succeed, she has so much spirit and stick-to-it-iveness."

"Oh, did Mrs. Emlin really say all that?" exclaimed Letty delightedly. "And may I write it to Emma? It would encourage her so." She sighed a little wistfully. "I am so glad Emma is going to begin earning her living, Aunt Mary. I am sure Mr. Goldberg will pay her well, and not make her work too hard. And if Mrs. Goldberg only takes a fancy to Tottie, as I am pretty sure she will, why, she'll do lots for them both, she is so warm-hearted and generous. I feel as if Emma's fortune was almost made."

"It is pretty hard to get going, when you want to earn money, isn't it?" she continued wisely. "I haven't the least notion what I could do if I had to make my living now that I haven't dear little Punch and Judy to show off any more. Oh, yes, I know," she added mischievously, "I could be a street singer like the girl in London who sang my pet ballad. Do you remember, Aunt Mary?"

But Mrs. Hartwell-Jones shuddered as she recalled the pinched white face and thin, ragged clothing of the poor little street singer.

“Ah, my little Letty, don’t jest about such things. It would be too dreadful!” she cried, holding out her arms.

Letty dropped her letters and ran across the terrace, kneeling beside Mrs. Hartwell-Jones as she said cheerfully, for she could not entirely conquer her spirit of fun:

“Never mind, dear Aunt Mary. I won’t ever have to be like the street singer because, don’t you see, by the time you are in danger of getting tired of me, I shall have had enough singing lessons to be able to give concerts to support myself, or at any rate, singing lessons.”

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones caught her face between her two hands and gazed tenderly at the laughing, upturned face.

“How can you make a joke of it, in any form, dear child?” she said reproachfully. “As if anything in the world could ever make me tired of my Letty.”

And mademoiselle, watching, saw that she was really hurt.

"I know, I know, dear Aunt Mary. But don't you see? It is because I am so sure that I dare to joke about it," replied Letty earnestly. "And I hope I shall be able to do something some day to show you how much it all means to me. But there, I promise not to interrupt any more, for I see you haven't finished Mrs. Emlin's letter. Only please tell me if she says any more nice things about Emma Haines. I still have a letter to read from Mary Beckwith and a picture post-card, all written over crisscross, from Clara Markham."

Letty turned and settled herself Turk fashion on the gravel beside Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's chair, having rescued her roaming letters from the breeze, and settled down quietly to read. The two made a pretty picture in the bright summer sunlight, the girl with her fresh, radiant face and soft brown hair, the older woman with a sweet, tender face framed in masses of prematurely white hair that only made the soft contour of her face more tranquil. She sat reading, with one hand resting caressingly on the girl's shoulder, and her expression was one of utter content.

"I hope with all my heart that nothing will ever happen to take Letty away from her," reflected mademoiselle, with a sudden strange little flutter of the heart. "It is almost fearful to love so strongly as that, *par exemple !*"

Mademoiselle sighed pensively as she turned her eyes away from the pretty picture, and folded her solitary letter back into its envelope.

"Did you have good news, mademoiselle?" asked Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, looking up quickly at sound of the little sigh.

"My letter was from Miss Sims," mademoiselle replied warmly. "Such a kind, dear letter! She writes me that should I care to come back before the expected time that my room at the school is ready for me. She speaks very cheerfully of the new school building. She is so brave about her loss! And so hopeful about making it up.

"And how kind it is of her to think of poor me, with so much on her mind. She says my room is waiting whenever I wish to come to it, and she says she is sure I could find two, three pupils if I care. Ah, she is a true friend, is Miss Sims."

"Three cheers for Miss Sims," cried Letty who, for some unknown reason, probably the sun, the warmth and her own good health, was bubbling over with spirits. "She is a wonder, and all the girls adore her, which is saying a good deal for a school principal. And now, mademoiselle, if we've done reading our letters, shall you and I go for a walk? I know that Aunt Mary wants us gone so that she can get to work at her writing."

"Am I selfish with my work, dear? I don't want you to have the feeling that you are being driven away."

"Dear me, no. I was only teasing. I dearly love our walks and lessons, don't you, mademoiselle? Particularly the walks. Do you mind going up the hill and letting me stop a moment at the Moores'? I promised to lend Violet my copy of 'Persuasion.' She said she thought it so funny that any one should ever have cared to write a story about this quiet little place."

"Ah, the *pauvre enfant*, she feels so very much out of the world with her quiet life," exclaimed mademoiselle sympathetically.

"Letty, dear, you talk so much about your

little lame lace-maker that I feel almost jealous," laughed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. "I think that some day I shall walk up there with you."

"Oh, I wish you would, Aunt Mary. I know you would love Violet, she's so sweet and quiet. And her house is the most picturesque place you can imagine. Why don't you come with us now?"

"No, no, not to-day. I am in the middle of a chapter. But before very long my work will be finished and then I shall take all sorts of walks with you."

As Letty and mademoiselle started off on their walk, Letty bethought herself of something, and ran back to ask Mrs. Hartwell-Jones a question.

"Aunt Mary, do you think I might speak about the great surgeon, who cures lameness, to Mrs. Moore and Violet? He might come to England some time, you know, and perhaps they could consult him about Violet.

"This town is so out of the way, and they live so quietly that they don't hear much news of what is going on in the world, and unless they knew, he might come to some place

quite close to them here and they would never know. But if I tell them about him, they could be on the lookout. Exeter is not very far, and if he should ever go there to lecture, why, they could take Violet to him and who knows, she might be cured !”

“ You dear, thoughtful little schemer ! But it is all so ‘ might be,’ dearie, that I don’t believe I should say anything. It would only raise hopes and dreams that perhaps would never be realized. But on second thought, I should say you might speak to the mother about it if you like, and can do so privately. But don’t risk raising false hopes in the little girl’s mind. But you are a dear, sweet girlie to think of it,” and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones kissed her lovingly.

CHAPTER XIV

AN EXCITING STORY

MRS. HARTWELL-JONES'S book was drawing to a close, and she was beginning to feel the need of fresh air and exercise. She had found the peace and quiet of the small seaside town excellently well suited to her needs and, once assured that Letty was busy and content, she had settled down to her work with the zest she always felt for her writing. And now that the book was almost finished, now that nothing remained but the last careful rereading and copying, she was ready to put by the manuscript for a time and take a well-earned holiday.

"How are the lace lessons coming on, dear?" she asked one morning at breakfast. "How many have you still to take to complete your course?"

"I have had twenty lessons, by actual count," replied Letty, "but I have learned much more than twenty lesson-fuls, because

Mrs. Betts has helped me so much at odd times and then mademoiselle has always been beside me, to boost me over the hard places. It has been almost like reading Latin with a translation at hand."

"Alas, I have been of very little help, *ma chere*," exclaimed mademoiselle modestly. "I find that I had forgotten much. But I have enjoyed the work *beaucoup* and I, too, have learned much. But, *ma chere*, where you have received the most help is from your new little friend, the dear lame girl, *n'est ce pas?*"

"Indeed, she has helped me more than I can say! Helped me in other things beside lace-making," added Letty thoughtfully. "She is so patient and uncomplaining, with all her suffering; for she does suffer a great deal at times, her mother tells me. But why do you ask about the lace lessons, Aunt Mary?" she inquired, going back to the original subject.

"I was wondering how soon you would want to leave Lyme Regis."

"Leave Lyme Regis!" echoed Letty in dismay. "But there, of course we have to leave

it some time. Only I had got so used to it all here, so settled down in our little ways, that I really do believe I shall be homesick when we go away."

"Would you rather stay on here for the rest of the summer? I had thought of visiting several more of the cathedral towns, and then perhaps going up to Scotland for two or three weeks before we sail for home."

"Oh, I should love that! Of course I am wild to see everything and go everywhere that we can. But it has been awfully nice here in Lyme Regis, and I hope we shall come back some time."

"I hope so, too, for it is a charming spot and I think I have done good work. I am glad my little girl has been so contented and happy, and now we shall all three go on a jolly holiday of sightseeing. You will go with us, won't you, mademoiselle?"

Mademoiselle flushed with pleasure at thus being included in Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's plans. But she declined, saying :

"If I could be of any use to you I should gladly go, dear madame, but I think you and Letty are a complete little company by

your two selves. It would be wiser for me to go back to Miss Sims, since she is kind enough to make ready for me at the school. It may be that I can help her in preparations for the fall term."

"Dear mademoiselle, always on the lookout to help somebody. Has she told you, Aunt Mary, about giving French lessons to Violet Moore?"

"She is the little lame lace-maker, is she not? Is she really a child of enough intelligence to wish to learn French?"

"Ah, yes, madame, she is quite remarkably bright. And very quick at learning. It is such a pleasure to her, in her dull, dreary life, to learn something new. I wish I might teach her more than I have," replied mademoiselle warmly.

"Just what sort of child is she?" asked Mrs. Hartwell-Jones confidentially, as Letty ran up-stairs for her hat. "I trusted to your discretion, mademoiselle, about letting Letty go there so much. You and she have both talked so much about the child that I am really very curious."

"She is, as I have said, a remarkable child in

many ways. Indeed, not as one would expect the child of a poor fisherman to be. She has had little or no book-learning, you understand, but she is so gentle and refined in her manner and way of speaking, that my curiosity also has been roused at times. I suppose it is the pain and suffering which have refined her nature. I have heard of such things.

“And she reminds me so strangely of some one, I cannot say who, though I think and think. Sometimes it almost comes to me, the resemblance; sometimes when you are talking to me of some quite foreign subject and my thoughts are far from the child, the picture of her face or the sound of her voice will flash across my brain and I think I have that likeness at last. But before I can put my thought upon it, *voilà*, it is gone again.”

“That is an uncomfortable feeling, isn’t it? I have experienced it several times, and I could never rest until I had traced out the resemblance. I think I shall have to go with you and Letty, some time, mademoiselle, to call on this little lace-maker. Indeed, I have practically promised Letty to go. Perhaps I

shall see the resemblance too, and can help you to place it."

"Ah, do come, madame. She would interest you, I am sure. You might make a story out of her, perhaps."

On their way to their lace lesson, mademoiselle told Letty what Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had proposed, and Letty was delighted.

"I am sure Aunt Mary will be interested in her. Perhaps she may even want to do something for Violet—I mean toward having her lameness treated. Aunt Mary is always doing so much for people, and I have thought a great deal about that famous surgeon. You know there is no reason to believe that Violet's lameness is incurable. Her father and mother have never had enough money to employ a really good doctor.

"Just think what it would mean to a girl like Violet to have her freedom again. I don't know when I've been so attracted to any one, mademoiselle, at first sight—except my Aunt Mary. I adored her the moment I first set eyes on her. And by the way, mademoiselle, I wonder if you have noticed it? There is something about Violet that reminds

me sometimes of Aunt Mary. I can't say exactly what it is ; I suppose there is a scientific name for people so far removed being like each other, but I'll call it 'mutual likeableness.' Have you ever noticed it ? ”

Mademoiselle gave a sudden odd little cry, and looked at Letty as if something had frightened her. But she recovered herself immediately and laughed.

“ It is nothing, nothing,” she said. “ My weak foot slipped on a loose stone, that is all. It is *vraiment rien*.”

They arrived at Mrs. Betts's shop just then, to find the solemn little mite of a pupil in charge, importantly full of the message she had been entrusted to deliver. Mrs. Betts had been called out to see a sick friend and was so sorry she could not give the lace lesson until later in the day, if that would suit miss's convenience.

Letty left word that they would return again at two, and the pair went on up the hill to Mrs. Moore's. It was rather early for a call, they knew, and they were not surprised, although disappointed, to be told that Violet was not dressed yet.

"She is mostly down before this time, miss," Mrs. Moore explained apologetically. "But she was kept awake last night by the pain. The poor child does not often suffer so much. But would you mind waitin'? I know she would be that disappointed to miss you, I couldn't comfort 'er. If you'll kindly excuse my goin' on with my work, we can sit 'ere in the shade until she comes. It has gone very 'ot, has it not?"

Mrs. Moore settled her two visitors in comfortable chairs in the cool, flag-paved courtyard, under the shade of the fuchsia tree. Letty and mademoiselle had their lace cushions with them and set to work industriously, while Mrs. Moore brought out her sewing. The air was filled with the fragrance of roses, and the atmosphere of the cool, dimly-lighted enclosure was very pleasant and soothing, after the heat and glare of the August sun.

"'Violet' is such a pretty name, Mrs. Moore," observed Letty by way of making conversation. "Is she named for any one in your family?"

"No, miss, I chose the name for 'er. My

'usband wanted to name her Maria, after 'is mother, but I thought it a pity to give such a frail, dainty slip of a girl such an ugly name. She looked like a wee sweet flower, miss, when she came. I'm glad you like the name."

"It suits her perfectly," said Letty heartily, "and 'Violet Moore' has such a pretty sound."

Mrs. Moore glanced behind her toward the house and lowered her voice carefully.

"You know," she said, "we never talk about it before our Violet, it 'urts 'er so, but she is not really our own."

Letty dropped her bobbins and clasped her hands eagerly, guessing a story. She and mademoiselle were both surprised at this sudden, unexpected statement, but thinking it over, they both wondered that they had never divined the truth. Many little differences between Violet and her supposed mother were thus explained.

"You mean that she is really not your own little girl?" she exclaimed breathlessly. "Oh, tell me. Is she some great princess in disguise that you are foster-mothering? Nothing would surprise me now. Do tell us, please, if you don't mind."

“Deary me, no, she’s nothing like so grand as all that, bless ’er sweet ’eart,” exclaimed Mrs. Moore. “Leastways, I ’ardly think so. But the tale is interestin’,” replied Mrs. Moore. “I thought Mrs. Betts might ’ave mentioned it to you. Our Violet is a waif—a shipwreck child, and we don’t know who are ’er people nor anything about ’er.”

“Oh, oh, how exciting! But did not Violet herself know? Couldn’t she tell you her name or where she came from?”

“No, miss, she was far too young to talk. She was a wee mite of a baby. It ’appened this way. My ’usband, as you know, is a fisherman. ’E used to cruise around the coast about ’ere, ’im and ’is partner. Fish is so scarce nowadays an’ the demand ’ereabouts so small, that ’e ’as shipped as mate on a bigger vessel for deep sea fishin’, and they sends their catches to London. My ’usband can’t be at ’ome quite so much, but ’e makes a bit more money.

“To get on with the story, ’im an’ ’is partner ’ad their boat out one day after a big storm, an’ they sighted a tiny rowboat off in the distance, flyin’ a signal of distress. They

sailed up close to the boat an' 'ailed 'er, but though they could see there was three people aboard, not a one answered their call. It fair puzzled them. They ran up alongside to see the reason for 't an' ——"

Mrs. Moore paused and looked at Letty hesitatingly.

"It isn't a cheerful story, miss. Perhaps I'd better not tell the rest?"

"Oh, but you couldn't leave it there!" ejaculated Letty. "I am too excited for words. Please go on!"

"Well, then, there were three people in the boat, as I said; two men, sailors, an' a woman. An' the woman 'eld a bundle in 'er arms, which was the only thing in the boat that stirred."

"And that bundle was Violet! Oh, Mrs. Moore, how thrilling!" sighed Letty, fairly wriggling with excitement and interest. "Go on, please. The rest, were they ——?"

"One was, miss. One of the sailors. The other man an' the woman my 'usband brought 'ome 'ere, an' we nursed 'em long an' faithful. But they died too, at last, an' we never found out the little one's name. The

woman was out of 'er mind, mostly, an' never talked sense. But Violet was as well an' 'ealthy as could be, 'cept for the sufferin' in 'er poor little leg. The doctor said it must 'a' been crushed when they put 'er out of the big ship that was wrecked into the life-boat.

"This much we learned from the poor sailorman. There 'ad been a whole boat load of people, who'd died off from 'unger or thirst or plain fright. But every one 'ad thought first of the baby an' 'ad saved water for it. The woman 'ad fed it till she sank down unconscious with the child still in 'er arms—just as they saw our boat an' knew 'elp was comin'.

"An' we kept Violet and brought 'er up as our own child," Mrs. Moore finished quickly, her eyes on the house door, "and if you please, miss, I mayn't talk more about it now, as it gives the poor child quite a turn to 'ear it mentioned."

She lowered her voice over the last words, for the tapping sound of approaching crutches was distinctly audible. An instant later Violet appeared in the doorway.

Letty tried to greet her friend in a natural

manner, and to appear quiet and calm, but she was vastly excited by the fragment of story she had heard, and her fancy would fly off to all sorts of possible and impossible "endings" to this romantic and mysterious history which made her absent-minded and inattentive.

"Weren't you terribly excited, mademoiselle?" she demanded as soon as they were on their homeward way. "It seemed too exciting and curious to be true. I was dying to talk it over with Violet. I wonder why she doesn't want it mentioned? If anything so thrilling had happened to me, I am sure I should want to talk about it all the time."

"Ah, no, Letty. Think what it means. It means that if Violet does not belong to these so kind people who have cared for her, why, then she does not belong to any one in the world. Can you not see how painful it is to her to feel that?"

"But I should go on trying to find out whom I really did belong to. I could never rest until I knew."

Mademoiselle shook her head.

"No doubt they tried and failed. Surely

by this time they have given up all thought of tracing her. And Violet is quite right not to wish it talked about."

"Of course you are right, mademoiselle. And it all must have happened over fifteen years ago, if Violet was a baby. Still, the story is so new and strange to me that I can't think of anything else, and so I find it hard to understand how Violet can keep it out of her mind."

They walked on for some time in silence, and a sudden thought sobered Letty's face.

"Mademoiselle," she said, "do you think we ought to speak about this to Aunt Mary? You know her sad story. Mightn't this bring it all back to her too painfully?"

"On the other hand," she added after a pause, "it might draw Aunt Mary to Violet. It would be a wonderful bond of sympathy. And then she might become interested in helping Violet to get well. What do you think we'd better do, mademoiselle?"

Mademoiselle's usually serene face looked grave and troubled. Her hesitancy in relating what they had just heard to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones went far deeper than Letty's reasons.

"I do not know, Letty *cherie*. I really do not know," she said slowly.

They walked on in a thoughtful silence, but as mademoiselle watched her companion's varying expressions she said at length :

"I think it is best to tell, after all, Letty. For I fear me that you could not keep it from your aunt anyhow. *N'est ce pas ?*"

Letty laughed ruefully.

"I know that my face is a dreadful telltale, mademoiselle, but I'll try my best to keep from showing it, if you think best. I wish I could ask Aunt Mary which she would rather have me do, tell or keep silence. She always gives such good advice."

They both laughed at this absurd suggestion of a solution of the difficulty and happening to look up just then, saw Mrs. Hartwell-Jones walking toward them.

CHAPTER XV

MRS. HARTWELL-JONES IS AGITATED

As she herself had expressed it, Letty's was a telltale face. At sight of her Aunt Mary, looking so serene and so distinguished in her soft, clinging gown of white, with her sweet, young face under the masses of white hair, Letty tried to compose her features and to behave in a quiet, every-day manner. She even began a lame conversation with mademoiselle in French, about a book they were reading, in order to distract her thoughts from the exciting tale they had just heard. But Mrs. Hartwell-Jones eyed her keenly and exclaimed at once :

“ Letty, something has happened. What is it ? ”

“ Nothing has really happened, Aunt Mary,” Letty replied evasively. “ I had just heard something—mademoiselle and I have been talking to Mrs. Moore —— ”

Terror smote at Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's heart.

“Your little lame friend has been taken ill with some contagious disease, and you have been exposed! Oh, Letty!”

Letty could not help laughing at this guess, it was so very far removed from the real facts, and hastened to assure her anxious aunt.

“Cross my heart, Aunt Mary, it isn’t that. Violet hasn’t anything catching, bless her. It is just that Mrs. Moore was telling us—telling us how Violet was made lame.”

Letty looked triumphantly at mademoiselle as she said this, feeling that she had achieved a masterly stroke of diplomacy. But her eagerness was too evident, and although mademoiselle affirmed her story and offered no further enlightenment, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones knew that there was more behind. But she also knew that her dear, transparent Letty would soon let the cat out of the bag, if cat there were concealed therein, and she bided her time.

“I came out on purpose to meet you,” she said, “and to propose that we all take a walk to one of your favorite spots, on the cliffs or upon that heather-covered moor you talk so much about, Letty mine. I have a longing to

look at vast spaces, and to breathe a great deal of very fresh air."

So they turned, and making their way through the lower end of the funny, crooked little town, mounted the hill on the opposite side from that where the little lame girl lived. Letty was delighted to have her Aunt Mary out walking with her, and pointed out all the spots she and mademoiselle had visited together.

"There is the church," she said, "with the graveyard behind, all slipping down into the sea. Isn't it dreadfully sad? How curious the sea is! Around by Sandwich and Deal it has gone back, oh, about two miles, mademoiselle, during the last few hundred years, leaving high and dry towns that were thriving seaports. But hereabouts it is washing and eating the land away, bit by bit. Is the French coast like that?"

When they reached the top of the hill, Letty led the way to a sheltered nook behind a bank, and spread her jacket over the springy heather for Mrs. Hartwell-Jones to sit upon. The common that stretched before them was but a bit of a moor at the best, but it was

filled with a silver haze and amethyst shadows, and at least had the advantage of not having in sight a human habitation.

“For all practical purposes, we might be in the middle of Dartmoor,” declared Letty with deep satisfaction. “It is hard to believe that just beyond our horizon is a commonplace railway line, and below and behind us, a broad concrete walk along the seashore, crowded with summer visitors. Aunt Mary, don’t you think it a perfect place for stories? Do tell us one, like a dear.”

“I do think it a perfect place for stories,” agreed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones promptly, “and so I suggest that you and mademoiselle tell me yours.”

Letty was taken aback.

“How in the world did you guess that I had a story to tell?” she asked ingenuously.

“Dear child! Give a baby a sticky bit of candy to eat and let him ask how you ever guessed he had had it. It shows all over your face.”

“Well, we did hear an awfully exciting story, didn’t we, mademoiselle? Mrs. Moore told us. But I was not sure whether we

ought to talk about it before you because—because ——”

“Because why, Letty dear?”

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's voice had become very quiet and soft, all at once, and both Letty and mademoiselle glanced at her in surprise. Could it be that Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had divined what was to come? Or had she heard the story, perhaps, from a different source? Mrs. Bishop, possibly, had told it, for it must be well known to every resident of the town.

“Well, because it is about—about the subject that is always painful to you, dear Aunt Mary,” replied Letty slowly, “and I did not want to waken unhappy memories.”

“You can never waken what never sleeps, precious child,” said the lady softly. “Let me hear the story, please.”

Then Letty related the fragment, as she had heard it from Mrs. Moore, of the rescue of Violet from the sea. She told it eagerly, dramatically, as it had struck her lively fancy; but she had not realized until its repetition how very fragmentary the story was.

“I think Mrs. Moore would have told us

more," she concluded, "only she stopped talking when Violet came out. She said that Violet could never bear to hear it talked about."

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones sat silent, and her silence seemed to have some deep, hidden meaning. Even Letty, who had expected something of the sort, since any mention of shipwreck always appeared to strike Mrs. Hartwell-Jones dumb; even Letty felt this silence.

Mademoiselle watched her dear friend's face with anxious eyes, and marked the tenseness of the lines about the mouth. Then she raised her eyes to those of her friend, eyes large, brown, filled now with an expression of odd longing, and suddenly the resemblance which had haunted mademoiselle for days became clear to her mind. The little Honiton lace-maker looked like Mrs. Hartwell-Jones!

"Oh, madame!" she cried out involuntarily, and then quickly controlled her feelings. It was the second time that day that the strange presentiment had seized her.

"It is only that you look so tired—so

pained, that it frightened me," she said hastily, to explain her ejaculation.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones turned and regarded her steadfastly. Had the same impossible thought entered both their minds at the same instant? Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's face had grown quite white, and her eyes glittered with an ill-concealed emotion.

"Oh, dear Aunt Mary, I am so sorry I told you! It was very wrong of me," cried Letty penitently.

"No, no, dear child, you did quite right to tell me. I think I should like to see this little lame girl for myself. I shall go soon to call upon her."

She rose as she spoke and they all made their way down the hill again, walking rather quickly, Letty and mademoiselle following Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's lead. That lady betrayed an odd interest in the story of the morning, at one moment showing a disinclination to mention the painful subject again, but stopping short the next moment to ask a question concerning some detail of the incident.

"I shall not rest until I have had the

whole story from this Mrs. Moore," she confided to mademoiselle in private. "It has affected me very strangely. I cannot tell when a story has taken such hold upon me. I feel——" She hesitated and then proceeded slowly: "It is difficult to describe just how I feel, but it is as if some subconscious forces were at work in my brain, urging me forward. As if—mademoiselle, don't think I have gone mad, but I feel as if I were on the brink of some great discovery!" And as she spoke, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's voice caught in a nervous sob.

But she was, to all appearances, as quiet and serene, if not quite as merry as usual, during luncheon, and Letty went off to her lesson in mademoiselle's company, believing that the sad little story had ceased to affect her precious Aunt Mary.

As soon as they were gone Mrs. Hartwell-Jones put on her hat, and going down the steps that led from the terrace of Mrs. Bishop's villa to the Parade, she turned in the opposite direction from that which the others had taken, as if she were going to walk on the Cobb. Just before one steps out on the stone pier, there is a hill, a very steep hill indeed,

that leads to the upper end of the town, above the part where the shops are. And up this hill Mrs. Hartwell-Jones turned.

As nearly as she could make out from scraps of information Letty had dropped from time to time, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones calculated that Mrs. Moore lived on the main street, half-way between the district of shops and the top of the hill. So she mounted the steep hill briskly, for she was a good walker, and pausing at the top only a moment to get breath, she turned down the street of the town, and after one or two inquiries, found the narrow covered passageway that led to the fisherman's cottage.

The picture that met her eye as she paused before entering the courtyard was one well worth studying. The dazzling rays of the afternoon sun flickered down through the dense foliage of the fuchsia tree and made changeable golden disks upon the flagged pavement, while sitting in the shadow of the vine-covered house wall was the little lame lace-maker. She had heard the sound of approaching footsteps and sat in a listening attitude, one hand poised above her cushion, her

brown eyes lifted with an eager, intent expression.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, herself still hidden from view by the darkness of the passage, gazed with an ardent, feverish curiosity at the sweet, lovely face thus raised to her. And as she looked an odd fancy, which crystallized into a strong, unreasoning belief, took hold of her mind and would not be shaken out by all the arguments of reason and common sense.

And with the idea, a wave of emotion so overcame her that she tottered and was obliged to lean for a moment against the wall of the passage. It was only for a moment, however. She soon rallied herself and entering the courtyard, crossed to where the lame girl sat and introduced herself. Mrs. Moore, always within call of her helpless daughter's voice, heard them speaking and hurried out in her hospitable, motherly way, to greet the aunt of their frequent young visitor.

"I am very pleased to meet you, ma'am," she said heartily. "Sit you down, do. Can I give you a cup of tea? It is early, I know, but the walk up the 'ill is steep and long, and thirsty work on a day like this."

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones smilingly but firmly declined the tea, and after a little general conversation said that, if it were possible, she would like to speak to Mrs. Moore in private for a few minutes, about a business matter.

Wondering what business she could have to discuss, either private or public with her, Mrs. Moore led the way indoors. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones apologized for leaving the little lace-maker alone.

"Please don't mind me, ma'am. I am quite used to it," replied Violet gently, and there was no reproach, only cheerful resignation in her voice.

"My little girl repeated to me the story you told her this morning," began Mrs. Hartwell-Jones the moment the two women were alone together, in what she believed to be a quiet, collected voice. "I should like to ask you a few questions about that—that rescue, if I may?"

Mrs. Moore's manner suddenly stiffened. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's use of the word "business" had been ill chosen. She had used it thoughtlessly, as a mere excuse, but it roused Mrs. Moore's suspicions. She remembered

what Letty had told her once, about her aunt writing books, and it occurred to her that Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had been attracted by the possibilities in Violet's story, and wished to make use of it for the basis of a good tale. She had no intention of letting the tragedy of her precious child's life be made use of by a writer of books, and she resolved to answer as few questions as possible.

"If you please, ma'am, it's something we don't talk about, ma'am," she said stiffly. "It is a pain to us both, as you may figure to yourself, ma'am."

"I do not wish to hurt your feelings, or to call up painful memories, dear Mrs. Moore," replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones quickly, "but I, too, suffered terribly in a shipwreck a good many years ago, and I thought we might sympathize with each other, the little girl out yonder and I. That is why my hair is white," she added simply.

Mrs. Moore's heart was touched with pity, but she still felt suspicious.

"There is 'ardly any more to tell," she answered briefly. "I told about all the story to the little miss this morning."

"But those other people in the boat, did they all die? Both of the men and the woman?"

"One of the men was dead when my 'usband reached the boat, ma'am," replied Mrs. Moore solemnly, "an' the other lived only a few days. It was from 'im we 'ad it that there had been a great many others in the boat at the first."

"But did none of them tell you the name of the ship they had come from? Where she sailed from or how she was wrecked?"

"She sailed from Southampton, but 'e never told us the name. 'E seemed to think as we must 'ave 'eard all about the wreck. But Lyme is a small town, ma'am, an' was smaller still in those days, an' very quiet out of the season. News of the world is very slow to reach us fisherfolk, an' we never got the rights of the tale."

"But the woman? What became of her? Could she not give you any news?" persisted Mrs. Hartwell-Jones anxiously.

"No, ma'am. She lived for going on a fortnight, but was out of 'er 'ead the whole time, an' talked nothing but gibberish. And

if you please, ma'am, you aren't never going to put our poor little story into your book? I know our Violet would be broken 'earted if she ever 'eard tell that 'er story 'ad been made public talk. She don't know that I've told it at all. She couldn't a-bear it, my lady."

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones rose wearily.

"I should never dream of doing such a heartless thing," she exclaimed in a hurt voice. "It would be like exposing one's most sacred griefs and emotions for the world to discuss. I am sorry to have troubled you, Mrs. Moore, and thank you for what you have told me."

She moved toward the door and her hostess followed, her feelings softening toward her visitor, who appeared so sad and tired.

"I'll tell you whatever more I can, if you care to 'ear, another time," she said, unbending. "Now as I know you don't mean to put it in a book, ma'am. But there's little enough to tell, at the best."

Pausing beside the chair of the patient lame girl, the lady stroked the curly brown hair gently and said :

"My dear, I wish I could do something for

you. What would you like to have most of anything in the world?"

"To have my body straight and strong, like your Letty's," replied Violet promptly, but with no hope in her voice.

"Did Letty tell you about the wonderful foreign doctor who treats just such illnesses as yours? He is in America now, but when he returns to England, if Mrs. Moore will allow it, I will arrange to have him examine you. He might be able to help, even if he could not cure you. Would you like that?"

"Oh, dear lady, it would make you seem to me like an angel from heaven!" cried Violet in a transport.

"There, child," interposed Mrs. Moore hastily, "don't go and fancy yourself cured, just from the thought of it. You are most kind and thoughtful, ma'am, I am sure," she added with tears in her eyes. "And I am sure my 'usband and I would not be too proud to accept your offer for the little un."

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones lifted Violet's slender, thin white hand and clasping it within both her own, gazed long and steadfastly at the sweet, patient face upturned to hers.

“Violet,” said Mrs. Hartwell-Jones softly, gently, “do you have a feeling that you have ever seen me before? You know sometimes people who are apparent strangers do have that feeling for each other—an odd drawing together as if they had been intimate once upon a time; perhaps in a former existence, perhaps ——”

She broke off abruptly, pressed the girl’s hand tenderly, and smiling a farewell to them both, turned and left the courtyard.

“Mother,” whispered Violet in a trembling voice, her eyes upon the archway through which Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had vanished, “mother, why did she look at me so strangely, and what did she mean by those odd words?”

“I do not know, daughter, I do not understand, but there, don’t you be frightened, my sweet. She meant only kindness, I feel sure.”

But Mrs. Moore’s mind was troubled.

CHAPTER XVI

SUSPENSE

MRS. HARTWELL-JONES did not go directly home. She took a long walk along the edge of the cliff and at length, clambering down a steep path, more of a track than a well-defined footway, she made her way home by the beach. It was late when she reached their lodgings in the little pink villa, and Letty was in a state of nervous apprehension.

"Oh, dear Aunt Mary, how thankful I am to see you!" cried Letty, running to the terrace steps and throwing her arms around Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. "Mademoiselle and I did not know where you had gone and we got quite frightened, didn't we, mademoiselle?"

"Bless your dear little heart, I am all right," said Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, laughing quite naturally as she kissed the soft warm mouth, and smoothed the roughened hair. "I just went for a walk, and walked rather farther than I intended."

But if Mrs. Hartwell-Jones succeeded in setting at rest Letty's anxieties, she could not quiet her own unrest. During all her long walk one question had kept repeating itself again and again and again in her mind: "Could it be possible? Could it be possible?" And each time her reason and common sense argued against the possibility. But at the end of each argument, the strong, unreasoning belief which had stolen upon her as she stood in the covered passageway of the fisherman's cottage, took possession of her again, each time stronger, more unshakeable in its sense of conviction.

Naturally her disturbed state of mind betrayed itself in her manner, and each day she grew more nervous, more absent-minded. Her appetite failed and she grew so restless that it became almost impossible to settle down to anything, either work or pleasure.

"You precious dear!" exclaimed Letty at last, almost in tears. "You have worked too hard over that horrid, ungrateful book. Please, you mustn't get ill, dear Aunt Mary!"

"I shan't get ill, my child; don't worry about me. I shall be all right in a day or

two," she answered, trying to reassure the two anxious faces bent upon her.

But the nervous restlessness continued. At last she gave up trying to reason away the fancy that had seized upon her, body and soul. If she had had some one in whom to confide, to have talked the whole matter over with, it would have eased her mind. But she considered Letty too young and mademoiselle of too emotional a temperament, even to suggest to them the stupendous idea that dwelt constantly in her mind and heart.

But do something she must. She resolved many times to go again to Mrs. Moore. She wished to ask more questions, but she hardly knew how to formulate them.

She walked out a great deal by herself, in the endeavor to soothe her fears and longings, and one day her restless feet carried her up the hill, past the church to the miniature moor where they all had sat so happily on the morning Letty had repeated Mrs. Moore's story. Oh, the wild hopes and fancies that story had conjured in her mind!

As she passed the church a sudden thought occurred to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. Perhaps

the vicar of the parish could help her. She turned the idea over in her mind as she climbed the hill. It seemed worth trying.

"If he is the same vicar who was here at the time, he will surely remember the case, and will no doubt be able to give me some information. He would be intelligent enough too, if he came in contact with her, to know whether the woman who spoke 'only gibberish' were a foreigner. At any rate, I shall try."

With Mrs. Hartwell-Jones in her present anguished state of mind, to think of a possible solution was to act upon it at once, and she retraced her steps hastily.

"Even if he can tell me nothing, it will be a comfort to me to unburden my mind to some one," she reflected, for she had resolved to tell the vicar the whole story.

Disappointment awaited her. At the vicarage the housekeeper told her that the vicar had broken down in health and had been obliged to go away on a month's holiday. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's expression of disappointment was so keen that it touched the good woman's heart.

"Are you in sore trouble, m'lady?" she asked. "Is your need of him great?"

"I am not exactly in trouble, thank you, but I am in need of the vicar. That is, I had hoped to get certain information from him, and advice."

"Would the curate do, m'lady? He's a very good man and my master puts great faith in him."

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's face brightened as her hopes rose again.

"Is he a very old curate?" she asked quickly, then corrected her blunder with a little laugh. "I mean, has he been here in Lyme Regis for a very long time?"

"For a longish time, m'lady. He is well acquainted with all the affairs of the parish, and wise beyond his years, I've heard my master say."

"Then I'll try him," Mrs. Hartwell-Jones exclaimed impulsively. "Will you please give me his address?"

"He is in lodgings, m'lady, at Mrs. Grote's, part way up the hill beyond. It is almost the other end of the town," she added regretfully, glancing sympathetically at Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's tired face.

“ Ah, I do not mind that, thank you. I am used to walking. And how am I to tell Mrs. Grote’s house when I come to it, please ? ”

“ By the name on the gate-post. ’Tis called ‘The Copper.’ That is a jest of her good man’s, m’lady, owin’ to his name, you see, Grote.”

“ I see,” replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones smiling mechanically, but with her thoughts far astray. “ Part way up the hill, you say ? Past the shops ? ”

“ Just so, a short distance beyond the ‘Three Cups.’ It’s straight on, you can’t miss it.”

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones thanked her again and walked quickly down the hill, smiling as she made her way among the crooked windings at the foot, at the woman’s parting direction, which is an habitual one in England. In a country where there is scarce a quarter-mile stretch of straight road, except the Roman roads, whomever one stops to inquire the way, with scarcely an exception the answer will be : “ It’s straight on, you can’t miss it.”

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones did not miss her directions but she did miss the curate. He had

gone to visit a sick mill-hand, but was expected back soon. So said Mrs. Grote, who looked at the beautiful, anxious-eyed inquirer with admiring sympathy and suggested that she come inside to wait.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones waited in the shabbily furnished little parlor until her nerves quivered with impatience. She had convinced herself that the curate would be of some help; in what way she did not yet know, but with each passing moment she grew more and more eager to unburden her mind to him. At length, unable to bear inactivity any longer she sought the landlady and procured from her the address of the house at which the curate was calling. Then she walked hastily down the main street again, knowing that there was no danger of meeting mademoiselle and Letty, who had taken their afternoon walk in the opposite direction. She found the street for which she was in search, among the several that twisted away at the foot of the hill beside the curio shop. As she turned down it, the charm of the scene almost made her forget her errand for the moment.

On the left stretched a long row of quaint

old houses, looking as if bent and twisted with age, their plainness softened by climbing roses, covered profusely with blossoms, which spread across the harsh surface as if they loved the faded, sun-warmed walls. On the right rushed a turbulent little mill stream, bordered by a low stone wall, with the green hill rising steeply just behind.

The number Mrs. Hartwell-Jones sought was near the extreme end of the street, but before she had traversed half the distance, she met the curate coming toward her. He stopped at once as Mrs. Hartwell-Jones addressed him, and listened, hat in hand, as she made known her errand.

"I have two stories to tell you," Mrs. Hartwell-Jones began at once. "Do you mind listening to them and then telling me if, in your judgment, they could be considered as two and two, and so made into four? I mean a carrying out of the old adage," she added hastily, smiling a little at his perplexity. "See, may we sit on that bit of wall over by the stream? I sought the vicar first, then walked to your lodgings and back here in search of you, and I am rather tired."

First Mrs. Hartwell-Jones related, as briefly as the facts permitted, the tragic story of her own experience by shipwreck, fourteen years previously, and then, as minutely as she could from the few items in her possession, the tale of the little lace-maker's rescue, when she was a tiny baby, by the fisherman of Lyme Regis.

"Now," she exclaimed with feverish eagerness, as she finished her stories, "now, do you see what I meant by two and two making four?"

"You mean," said the curate slowly, "that you think that Mrs. Moore's little lame girl may be ——"

"Yes, yes," Mrs. Hartwell-Jones interrupted him nervously. "Then you do see a similarity between the stories? The two pieces of the puzzle might fit together? It is not all my imagination?"

"No, there are many points of similarity, many, but as yet, no proofs," replied the curate cautiously, dreading to rouse a hope which, if fostered, he saw would be an unbearable shock should it prove false. "It might be a mere coincidence. You must

take into consideration the amazing likenesses coincidences are apt to take to real facts."

"I am sure I shall find proofs," Mrs. Hartwell-Jones continued breathlessly. "I cannot rest until I am sure of either one thing or the other. I thought perhaps the vicar might have remembered some significant incident that occurred at the time."

"I dare say he might. Shall I write to him for you?"

"Oh, if you would! But that means more waiting. Isn't there something I could do at once? Those people who died; Mrs. Moore insisted that the woman was delirious all the while, but I think possibly her supposed raving might have been an Italian patois. My Caterina could not speak a word of English. I have been to consult the village doctor, but he is quite a newcomer; the doctor who lived here at that time has since died."

"Ah, but the deaths of those people will have been recorded in the parish books," exclaimed the curate, inspired by a sudden thought. "If you wish, we can go up to the

church at once, and look the matter up," he suggested, marking the feverish excitement of Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's manner.

That usually composed lady had let herself go for the moment, had given herself over to an intoxicating frenzy of hope, upon which no doubt, either of reason or fear, cast a shadow. She fell into a musing reverie as they walked up the hill together to the old stone church, and she felt suddenly timid and shy, as if some great mystery were about to be revealed to her.

The curate studied her abstracted face curiously. He had seen much of Violet Moore during his residency in Lyme Regis, had taught her and had learned to love the docile, sad spirit of the lame girl. And now, was it his fancy, or did he see a resemblance in the sweet, anxious face beside him?

They entered the vestry, and motioning her to a seat, the curate unlocked a cupboard at one side of the room and took down several great, heavy books.

"Here is the year," he said at length, and carried one of the books to a reading desk beneath a high window of stained glass.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones rose and stood beside



THERE WERE TWO NAMES

him, and as the curate traced the columns of the book, page after page, she felt as if her heart were bursting with suspense. All at once the curate uttered a sharp exclamation and pointed to a certain entry, half-way down the page. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones bent to look. There were two names written, one beneath the other.

“James Hallowell, able seaman; home, Hereford.”

“Caterina ———. Foreign, surname unknown.”

And the dates were two and three weeks later than that of the wreck of the “Princess Alicia.”

The air around Mrs. Hartwell-Jones appeared all at once to grow heavy and riotous, filled with moving black particles that choked and blinded her. She caught at the edge of the desk to steady herself, dimly conscious that the curate was speaking, but not at all taking in his words.

Then all at once her brain cleared. The nervous unrest of the past few days left her. She was able to face the case intelligently, to separate fact from fancy.

"I am more obliged to you than I can ever express," she said solemnly to the curate. "I am morally convinced that the little girl known as Violet Moore is my own child, lost from the ship upon which we were wrecked; and rescued, with her Italian nurse, by this fisherman, Moore. But of course much remains still to be said and done."

"And if I can assist you, at any time or in any way, please command my services," responded the curate cordially.

"Thank you. I shall not hesitate to do so." And thanking him again for his aid and interest, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones took leave of the curate and walked rapidly home.

CHAPTER XVII

A GREAT DISCOVERY

MRS. HARTWELL-JONES quickly settled upon a plan of action. Before she confided her convictions to any one, she must have another interview with Mrs. Moore. And it must be a private interview, with no danger of interruption. How to accomplish this without rousing suspicions puzzled her at first; but she soon received an inspiration.

In the absorption of her revery she had absent-mindedly walked past the turning that led to the Parade, and rather than turn back, she decided to go on and avail herself of the permission granted by the proprietor of the "Three Cups" to use the short cut through his garden. As she passed the inn she saw in the window a placard advertising a motor car for hire.

"The very thing!" she ejaculated, stopping short. "I'll send them off on a motor ride, Letty, mademoiselle and Violet!"

Entering the inn, she engaged the motor on the spot for the following afternoon, and hurried home, very late but in such high spirits that Letty was astonished until she was told of the proposed excursion and believed that her beloved Aunt Mary was so radiantly happy because she was able to give such a great pleasure to the little lame girl. Letty herself was in a state of delirious joy and went rollicking off with mademoiselle at once, to carry the good news to the fisherman's cottage.

"Aunt Mary has just discovered that there is a motor car to be hired at the 'Three Cups,' " she exclaimed, the moment they had entered the courtyard, "and, Violet, what do you think? You are to go off with mademoiselle and me for a whole long afternoon's ride!"

"Me go for a ride in a motor!" ejaculated Violet, hardly able to believe her ears.

When the motor drew up at the curb the next afternoon at the appointed hour, Violet was already out on the pavement, too excited to sit upon the stool anxious Mrs. Moore had fetched, but standing, leaning on her crutches and watching with eager eyes. Mrs. Hart-

well-Jones alighted and the chauffeur lifted Violet into the car in her place, carrying the frail, slender body with ease.

As soon as they were out of sight, waving joyous farewells, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones turned to Mrs. Moore and said :

“ May I come in and talk with you a little while ? ”

Mrs. Moore assented civilly, half pleased by the attention, yet half in dread of she knew not what, to come.

“ I want to say a good deal,” Mrs. Hartwell-Jones continued frankly, “ so if you would please get your sewing and settle down, here in the shadow of the courtyard, it would make me more comfortable about taking up your time. I admit that I sent all our young people away on purpose to have this talk. I am going to confide in you, Mrs. Moore, and then you will understand me better.”

Mrs. Moore looked up quickly. She was darning a little frock of Violet's.

“ The poor child wears them out so, under the arms, with her crutches,” she explained.

“ Is it about the shipwreck you wish to speak, ma'am ? ” she asked.

"Yes, yes, if you please," Mrs. Hartwell-Jones said quickly, and then stopped.

She had grown pale and agitated. She sat biting her lips and folding her handkerchief into tight creases until she had mastered her emotion. The effort required to speak of the matter in her mind made it clear how very serious the situation was. But when she began to speak, it was without stopping, as if she felt the relief of getting the weight off her mind.

"Such an idea has taken possession of me, Mrs. Moore, that I feel I must call it a conviction, rather than a fancy. You remember that I told you the other day that I, too, had once suffered terribly in a shipwreck? Well, in that wreck I lost my husband and—and my dear, dear baby daughter!"

Her voice broke in a sob and Mrs. Moore looked up, startled. She was about to speak, but Mrs. Hartwell-Jones checked her with a gesture.

"Wait, please. Let me finish. The wreck happened at night. There was fearful excitement and confusion on board, of course. My husband had brought my baby and me on

deck. The baby was in the nurse's arms. My husband went to another part of the ship to help and presently he was brought back—senseless—he had been struck by a falling spar.

“He was—dying—Mrs. Moore—dying—and, needless to say, I forgot everything and every one but him. I suppose I fainted at last—or went out of my head—for when I came to myself every one had left the ship but the captain, a few of his crew and myself. My—my baby was gone! She and the nurse had been put in one of the life-boats—the captain did not know which one, of course.

“It was days before I recovered my senses and by that time we had been picked up and the ship that rescued us had nearly reached the United States. You may guess how hard I worked to—to find my baby, Mrs. Moore. I did everything, I believed, that human agency could do. I employed the most skilful detectives both in America and England. But I never heard a word.

“But the other day—hush! No, no, please let me finish. The other day when my Letty came home and told me—told me the story

you had told her, I—it seemed that something spoke in my heart, Mrs. Moore. Something that has been speaking ever since, saying the same thing over and over. Do you believe in the supernatural, Mrs. Moore? No, no, not the supernatural—that is not the word—but a sense within us that knows one thing when our reason says the other. A voice that neither reason nor logic, nor yet the force of circumstances can silence, keeps repeating something over and over to my inner consciousness. And what it says is——”

She stopped speaking again, too overcome to give utterance to that which had possessed her through all these days of uncertainty and suspense.

But Mrs. Moore divined what she would say. She was almost as agitated as Mrs. Hartwell-Jones herself.

“You don’t mean to say that you—you fancy that our Violet—our little lame Violet—may be——?” she ejaculated, bringing out the words in jerks between trembling lips. “Oh, I—why, ma’am, I——”

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones held up her hand.

“Hush! Wait, please. We must both

look at this thing quietly, sensibly. We must not jump blindly to conclusions. For the past few days I have felt like a wild thing, but yesterday I learned something that convinced and calmed me. I can look at the matter reasonably, for now I am sure. There are many, many things yet to be proved, of course. And yet——” She paused and then said solemnly, “I feel my conviction stronger than ever. The inner voice is as insistent in its claims.

“Oh, Mrs. Moore, tell me, will I be horribly cruel to you if—if what I think, hope, almost know is coming to pass, will the pain of it be too hard for you to bear? Words can never express the fulness, the overwhelmingness of joy such an event would bring to me. But shall I be inflicting a sorrow equally great upon you?”

Mrs. Moore was trembling but she spoke bravely.

“If—if we are to lose our Violet, ma’am, I shall always try to remember what it will mean to ’er and to you, ma’am, who have suffered so long. Do you know, ma’am,” she added after a pause, “I’ve always known, in

my 'eart of 'earts, that a time such as this would come, 'm. When she was brought to me, a tiny 'elpless baby—so ill an' 'urt, poor mite ——”

“ Oh, don't, don't ! ” interposed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, with a sob.

“ My 'eart went out to the precious mite, but I said to meself then an' there, that I would take 'er but as a treasure belonging to some one else but trusted to me keep for a time. I told my man I should always bear that in mind.

“ And I 'ave tried to, ma'am, I tried —— But the years 'ave been many an'—an' she has grown very dear to my man an' me ! ”

Whereupon the two women wept together in their mutual sympathy and grief, after which they both felt much better. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones was the first to recover herself, and she put away her handkerchief with a resolute air, saying :

“ But we must come back to prosaic facts, dear Mrs. Moore. Neither your husband nor my lawyer will allow me to claim and you to give over Violet to me, merely because I 'feel ' that she is mine and because you have

always 'felt' that some day she would be so claimed. Ah, but how could the English detectives have failed to discover this clue!" she interrupted herself with a little wail.

"I fear me we didn't go far to let the world know about findin' of the child, ma'am," admitted Mrs. Moore rather shamefacedly. "We are poor folk and this is an out-of-the-way part o' the world. I seldom see newspapers, so would 'ardly know if anything 'ad been in them about—about your loss. An' my 'usband was too much at sea to 'ear much gossip on the land, ma'am."

"But he must have heard news of the wreck from his fellow sailors?"

"Ah, yes, I dare say. But 'ow would that give us a clue to the baby's name or people?" retorted Mrs. Moore quickly, feeling that she must defend her husband. "We 'ad no money to spend in startin' a search an'—an' my man soon after went off on a long voyage. I grew fond of the baby; she was company when I was alone. And so time drifted on. We did what we could for 'er poor, 'urt body. We took 'er as often as we 'ad money for the journey to Exeter for treatment by a good

surgeon there. And—and I've always been kind to 'er, ma'am." And poor Mrs. Moore broke down and cried again.

"I am sure of that, my dear," replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones warmly, growing calmer and more collected as the other's emotion increased. "Let us talk the matter over seriously. We cannot change the past, but we may unravel the mystery of the present. You say that none of the survivors mentioned the name of the boat from which they had been wrecked?"

Mrs. Moore shook her head, drying her eyes on the frock she was darning. "Never to my knowledge. The other sailor talked very little before he died, poor soul, an' as for the woman, she talked nothing but gibberish the 'ole time, with never a sensible moment. She seemed to 'ave used up all her sense in caring for the baby."

"Do you know, Mrs. Moore, that gibberish, as you call it, is one of the causes of my conviction," replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones quickly. "I am wondering if what she spoke was delirium or—a foreign language?"

Mrs. Moore looked up, startled by the new

possibility. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones watched her with bated breath.

“My word!” exclaimed the fisherman’s wife slowly, “I never thought of that.”

“But you think it might have been? Oh, Mrs. Moore, might it not have been? My baby’s nurse was an Italian woman; she did not know a word of English! Describe the woman to me, please, quickly.”

“Well, as I remember, she was smallish an’ dark ——”

“With black eyes and hair? And was she dressed in dark blue, with a band of red around the bottom of the skirt?”

Mrs. Moore’s slow wits went back over the years.

“I rather fancy she was. But w’at I remembers best was the long blue cloak that she ’ad wrapped round ’erself an’ the baby.”

“Ah, the long blue cloak! It was Caterina! My baby, oh, my baby!” cried Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. “Tell me more. Do tell me more.”

Mrs. Moore’s senses were returning.

“If clothes’ll ’elp to prove anything,” she said, rising, “I’ve the very clothes little Violet ’ad on; every identical article.”

Although she was not more than four minutes absent from the room, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones felt as if the agony of suspense was almost beyond endurance. The moment she caught sight of the neatly folded little garments, she knew that the quest of years was ended. Her baby had been found!

When the merry motor party returned, happy and gay, they found Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones laughing and crying over a tiny heap of infant clothes, clothes soft and beautifully fine, but stained and gray with the stale sea-water, and slightly yellowed with their fourteen years of lying away in Mrs. Moore's best chest.

"Oh, Aunt Mary, what is it? What has happened?" cried Letty, running to her and clinging to her with loving arms. "I know that something has happened. Is it anything bad?"

"Oh, no, no, Letty dear! If it is true—and oh, it is true—it is very, very good. Unbelievably good! Dear little Violet, can you bear to hear some very great news? Will you be brave and sensible?"

The little lame girl looked at her gravely and steadfastly.

"I have always borne a great deal. Please tell me what it is," she said gently.

Then, as calmly and clearly as she could, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones made known her great discovery.

"Letty dear, Violet dear, we believe, Mrs. Moore and I, that you, Violet, are my little daughter, whom I lost at sea so many years ago!"

It is impossible to describe the scene that followed; the surprise, the delight, the curiosity, the deep feeling.

"Of course there is a great deal yet to be settled, children," Mrs. Hartwell-Jones said at last. "Masculine minds must be satisfied with more solid proofs. But those can be obtained, somehow, and in the meantime, how happy, happy, happy I am!"

And turning, she clasped the lame girl to her breast, but gently, tenderly, not vehemently as she would have desired, for she remembered the poor, injured hip.

CHAPTER XVIII

PROOF POSITIVE

DAYS of excitement and rejoicing followed. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had sent a cablegram to Mr. Shoemaker, her lawyer, that very evening, and he had replied that he would come to her by the first ship that sailed, for his help and presence would be needed.

Mrs. Moore's husband, too, was expected home almost any day, and while they all waited for these determiners of their fate, the little group of women and girls in the small seashore town talked and made plans and adjusted themselves and their habits.

Letty could hardly believe the wonderful thing that had come to pass. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones begged her to keep their secret until everything had been definitely settled.

"Of course we are just about as sure of it as mortals can be sure of anything, dearie," she had said. "But before we tell the world, let us have all our proofs."

Letty, who had already planned long letters to Mary Beckwith, Clara Markham and Emma Haines, agreed to the common sense of this decision, and tore up the letters, but she felt that she could not contain her joy without some expression, so she bought a blank book and began a journal.

“It will help to relieve my mind, anyhow,” she reflected, “and perhaps, when we get back home, I can show it to Emma Haines. And when we do go back—oh, think who will be with us!”

She found a great deal of comfort, too, in talking over the wonderful event with Violet herself, and unburdening some of her excitement.

“It is just too beautiful to be true,” she said, “except that my Aunt Mary ought to have all the most beautiful things happen to her. Oh, Violet, aren’t you glad, glad, glad?”

Violet was very bewildered by the astonishing turn which events had taken. Her life up to the present moment had been absolutely and completely uneventful, consisting of sitting in the flag-paved courtyard, under the

shade of the fuchsia tree in summer and in an armchair in front of the kitchen fire in winter, with her lace cushion or an occasional book on her lap. Since she could not attend school on account of her lameness, the parish curate had helped Violet with her education, but his time was very much taken up with his parochial duties and progress had been slow and intermittent.

She was quick at learning, and early mastered the art of reading, although very few books came in her way. If there were any money left from the sale of her lace, after buying her few clothes, Violet spent it for books, and treasured her meager little library.

She knew the story of her rescue, and that she was not the fisherman's own child. She felt the burden of her helplessness all the more on this account, and had rejoiced greatly when she found that she could earn enough by the sale of her lace to clothe herself. She also hoped some day to earn enough money to pay back her kind adopted parents for the money they could so ill afford for the Exeter surgeon.

The course of her life had run so very quietly and dully that at first it was almost

impossible to realize the great change that was impending. She felt dazed, bewildered, overwhelmed. Whenever Mrs. Hartwell-Jones came, she was seized with intense shyness, amounting almost to sullenness at times, so silent she became. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's feelings were deeply hurt at length, and she felt secretly frightened lest this new-found daughter would grow completely estranged.

But Letty understood and tried to explain Violet's sensations to her precious, suffering Aunt Mary. To Violet in turn, she talked long and eagerly of Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and her kindness and thoughtfulness. One day she told the story of her own adoption, and that went further than anything toward breaking down the barrier of Violet's timidity.

"Do you mean that you were a poor little girl too, when—when she took you in?" Violet asked, hesitating over Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's name, but feeling somewhat reassured by the thought that perhaps one day Letty had been as poor and ignorant as herself.

"Indeed I was—so poor that I was ready to do anything to earn a living. I did not even have a nice, warm home, as you have, and

people as kind as parents to me; but I traveled around with a circus. Oh, how dreary it was! Mr. and Mrs. Drake were always kind to me, in their way, but I had not known them very long—hardly at all before they took me into their circus, and when the circus broke up, I saw that they did not feel that they could share their home with me any longer.

“And there I was, without a friend or relation in the whole world, when my adorable Aunt Mary came along like a fairy godmother and took me in!

“And just think, Violet, she is your own, own mother, who has grieved for you all these long years. You don't know—you can't guess how perfect she is, and how she loves you. Please forget that she is a great lady and that you seem like a fisherman's girl, but remember that all that is a mistake; that you really are Aunt Mary's own, own daughter, that she has wanted and wanted and wanted!”

“But it is so hard to believe—to understand,” protested Violet shyly.

“Of course it is. I can see that. But it's true, nevertheless, and Aunt Mary's heart is



"I THINK SHE IS WONDERFUL"

just aching to hug you. Please try to get over being bashful. She doesn't understand, and is afraid you have taken a dislike to her."

"Oh!" cried Violet, her brown eyes filling with tears, "I take a dislike to her! I think she is wonderful, wonderful! And so very beautiful, Letty. With all that soft white hair and those rosy cheeks! I never dreamed of any one so beautiful!"

"Then tell her so," replied Letty practically. "If only you'd say some of these nice things to Aunt Mary instead of about her! Just let yourself go, once—only once, Violet, and you'll never be afraid of Aunt Mary again. You couldn't be. Why, it's because she lost you that that beautiful hair you admire so much is white. It turned white when you were lost from the wrecked ship, think of that, Violet."

Violet hung her head.

"I am such a stupid, dull person, Letty. I am afraid even to speak before her, for fear I'll say something wrong."

"Rubbish. You'll soon get over that. Why, Violet, Aunt Mary wouldn't care if you spoke Choctaw, she'd be so busy thinking

that she had you back again. I dare say she wouldn't even notice the difference."

"What is Choctaw?" asked Violet curiously yet timidly, afraid that it might be one of the things she ought to know and did not.

"Oh, it's some sort of Indian talk, I think. I don't know. That's just a saying. But really, Violet dear, I don't think it's fair to go on hurting Aunt Mary's feelings this way."

"Do I really hurt her feelings?"

"Of course you do. Suppose you were a mother and your daughter that you hadn't seen for fourteen years behaved as if she didn't love you and were afraid of you?"

"I am afraid of her."

"Well, wouldn't your feelings be hurt?"

"Yes, I fancy so. But listen, Letty. It just doesn't seem possible that she is my mother. I'll—I'll—well, I'll just have to get used to her, that's all."

Letty wanted very much to laugh at the idea of one's getting used to one's own mother, but she did not, knowing how desperately in earnest Violet was. She thought for a moment, her chin resting in the palm of

her hand. Then she looked up and said brightly :

"I tell you what, make a story of it for yourself. That is the way I got over being scared when I did the tumbling act with my big brother."

"I don't understand."

"Why, this way. Give up trying to make yourself believe that Aunt Mary is your mother and all that, but pretend to yourself that she is. Make the truth into a pretend-story. Just imagine that Aunt Mary came, as she did, to call on Mrs. Moore, as an ordinary visitor, and that you fell in love with her and made believe she was your mother. Make up a story and think of yourself in the story as her daughter. Think this over and over again, playing it like a game and making up all sorts of conversations with her. And in the conversations call her 'mother dear' as often as you can in your play-pretend story. Then, the first thing you know, you'll be quite used to it. It will be like waking up from a dream and finding it come true."

"I think I see what you mean," replied Violet thoughtfully. "I'll try it."

Therefore, upon Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's next visit, Violet began to weave the little story Letty had suggested, but looking up suddenly, she found Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's eyes bent so lovingly, so longingly, upon her, under the white hair, that she forgot everything except Letty's words, "Remember that that beautiful hair is white because she lost you." She opened her arms wide and cried out, in a broken, frightened voice :

"Mother, oh, mother! Are you really my mother?"

In another second Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's arms were about her; she had lifted the frail, suffering body to her knees and was holding it close, close to her wildly beating breast.

"My baby! My precious, precious baby! Oh, how my heart has ached for you, all these years!"

The days flew swiftly by. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had sent another cablegram to America, a rather long one addressed to Mrs. Emlin, making inquiries about the celebrated Austrian surgeon; asking how long he was to remain in the United States; and whether in the East or West. The letter in answer to

that cablegram was to affect Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's movements, and she was content to make no definite plans until it came.

Mr. Shoemaker arrived at length, as speedily as steamer and train could bear him, and as soon as he had heard the story, was shown the church record and the baby clothes, he felt that there was nothing more to be said or done.

And to make assurance doubly sure, Mrs. Moore's husband returned from his long sea voyage and confirmed all his wife's statements. He, too, was overcome at the thought of losing the child who had been as their own for so long, but he made no moan.

"The only thing that I should like to have had happen," said Mr. Shoemaker at the conclusion of a long consultation, "is to have had the surviving man or the woman mention the name of the ship that was wrecked."

Mrs. Moore shook her head.

"The woman did not speak one English word, sir," she reiterated. "She talked just gibberish, or what I thought was such, 'er bein' out of 'er mind. But Mrs. 'Artwell-

Jones says it might 'ave been Eyetalian. I used to remember some of the words she said, they were so queer. One was like snoring."

"*Signora,*" interpolated Mrs. Hartwell-Jones with a smile.

"And another was, or sounded like *princhi-something,*" continued Mrs. Moore, astonished at Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's ready interpretation of such queer words. "Those were the nearest to English she spoke at any time."

"Was it '*Principessa*'?" asked Mrs. Hartwell-Jones eagerly, bending forward.

"Yes, ma'am, that's it—or as near as I remember. It's a many years ago, you know, ma'am."

"Why, she was trying to tell you the name of the ship, then, all the time," exclaimed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones excitedly, "only she was saying it in Italian. It was the '*Princess Alicia.*'"

"Why, wife, lass," exclaimed the fisherman, looking toward his wife in mild surprise, as he grasped at what they were saying, "'ave ye forgot the name o' the boat? I knowed it all the w'ile, and told it ye at the time. 'Twas painted as plain as a pike staff

on the side o' the life-boat we got the poor things from—the 'Princess Halicia.'” He turned to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones apologetically. “I 'eard all about the wreck o' the 'Princess Halicia' on board my next voyage, but I was bound for the Hafrican coast, and knowed 'twould be many a month before I could send word to any one 't we had found the child. Moreover, w'en I left, the poor babe was so sick I doubted in me mind if she would live.

“I was taken sick meself in Hafrica, and could not come 'ome with me own ship. W'en I did get back, a year an' more 'ad gone by, heverybody seemed to 'ave forgotten the wreck of the 'Princess Halicia,' an' the little miss was grown into quite a 'ealthy child. My wife 'ad grown so fond of the mite, an' she was such a company to 'er, that I said no more about the matter.

“Nobody 'ad hasked for the child, so far as I knowed, an' as we 'ad saved 'er, I thought as we 'ad a right to keep 'er.

“I'm sorry, lady, for all the years you've 'ad a sorrow to bear, but I'm sure the little lass will make it hall up to you, she is so lovin' an' gentle. 'Tis my good woman an' me. 'ere, as

will 'ave to suffer now." And the strong man frankly passed the back of his hand across his wet eyes.

His wife came to his side and taking his other big, brown hand, stroked it silently.

"Oh, I will not leave you, I cannot leave you!" sobbed Violet, catching up her crutches and limping across the room to the pair whom until now she had always called father and mother.

"Ah, but you can and will, dear soul, for 'tis your duty. We are always given the strength to do our duty, lass."

And hearing this Mrs. Hartwell-Jones realized that, even if her little daughter had lost many years of book-learning and training, still she had had a higher sort of education with these simple fisherfolk, who saw their duty so plainly and accepted it, however hard, patiently and uncomplainingly.

CHAPTER XIX

HOME AGAIN

As soon as Mr. Shoemaker had pronounced his verdict, "that Violet really was Violet," as Letty expressed it, she let slide a perfect avalanche of letters upon her friends, announcing the good news. It was she, also, who confided the excitement to Mrs. Betts and to their interested landlady.

"And I am so glad you have that extra little room opening off Aunt Mary's, Mrs. Bishop," Letty added, "because it is just the place for Violet when she comes here. Your house is something like my friend's, Mary Beckwith's, summer home, always room for one more. Her brother Seth calls their house the 'rubber band,' because it stretches so to accommodate more visitors.

"Oh, Mrs. Betts, I hope I am the first to tell you," she cried, bobbing into the good woman's shop very early on the morning after Job Moore's return.

"To tell me what?" gasped Mrs. Betts, very much astonished and a little alarmed.

"Why, about Violet."

"And what about Violet? Lauk-a-me, miss, don't tell me anything's 'appened to the child!"

"Oh, a very great deal has happened! Something beautiful! Something you could never guess if I gave you a thousand and one guesses, which I wouldn't have time to wait for you to give, so listen. Violet Moore is not any longer Violet Moore, but Violet Hartwell-Jones! My Aunt Mary lost a baby in a shipwreck, you know, and Violet is the baby, and it's all been proved and seconded and I am so happy, happy, happy, for now Aunt Mary has her little girl again, and I have a sister.

"And I can't stay for a lesson this morning, Mrs. Betts, because I have so many, many letters to write. Isn't it glorious news? Good-bye."

"Yes, but miss—miss —— Tell me ——"

But Letty was gone, leaving the astonished Mrs. Betts staring and gasping.

And that was about the tenor of Letty's letters. She was so eager to tell every one

the wonderful news that she was too impatient to finish one letter before beginning another, and by return mail came many anxious inquiries to know what it was all about, or had Letty taken leave of her senses!

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, too, was in a whirl. Her usual calm clear-headedness seemed to have deserted her entirely, and she appeared incapable of planning. Fortunately Mr. Shoemaker was there to suggest arrangements and mademoiselle to carry them out.

Mademoiselle proved to be Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's standby at this juncture. Instead of the emotional flyaway to whom Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had been afraid to trust her first vague hopes, mademoiselle was quiet, calm and full of repose. The news of Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's happiness had affected her like a beautiful piece of music. It was too wonderful, too solemn to grow gay or excited over.

But one idea Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had very clearly in mind.

"I cabled at once—at the same time I sent your message, Mr. Shoemaker—to Mrs. Emlin, asking her to find out how soon the famous Dr. Heinrich was returning to this side. I

knew she could find out promptly and positively, because she is in constant communication with Dr. Heinrich, arranging for his course of lectures at the Settlement House. I am most anxious to have this doctor see Violet and find out whether the precious child can be cured, or at any rate helped. Mrs. Emlin was to reply by letter, as I wanted to know more details than a cablegram could give me, and I have just received her letter.

"I intended, if Herr Heinrich were returning to this side before very long, to wait over here and consult him. But Mrs. Emlin writes that he is to remain in America another two months at least, possibly three. And so, Mr. Shoemaker, I want to go directly home."

"I don't wonder, dear lady, and I anticipated as much. Not, of course, for the reason you mention, because I did not know——" He was letting a kindly gesture complete his meaning, but Mrs. Hartwell-Jones said bravely:

"Speak of it, please, whenever necessary. Violet's lameness is a great grief to me, but it is a fact which has to be faced and borne—

perhaps. It may be curable. At any rate I shall not rest until I have tried every means in my power."

"You are quite right, quite right. And if it be possible to consult this celebrated Austrian surgeon at home, it will make things much simpler for you, in every way."

"Yes, and whatever may have to be done, we shall have the comfort of being in our own home. So please, what is the very first ship on which we can get passage home?"

Gravely, but with a twinkle of satisfaction at having gauged so well her feelings on the subject, Mr. Shoemaker produced from an inner pocket the folders of several different steamship lines, and, spreading them out upon the table, pointed out the positions of various staterooms to be had.

"I had just time between trains to stop in at the different offices for these," he explained, "and I had them mark rooms on both this and next week's sailings. You see you can get excellent accommodation on almost any line at this season. The rush back does not begin until about the first of September."

"Then show me the steamer sailing earliest

of all upon which I can have as many state-rooms as we shall need," answered Mrs. Hartwell-Jones impulsively.

She looked across at the grave, quiet gentleman who had served her so faithfully in so many crises of her life.

"You are certainly a friend in need, Mr. Shoemaker," she exclaimed warmly. "You have always come to me promptly in time of need, but this time I have asked of you more than ever before. It distresses me when I remember that I have brought you all the way across the ocean to come to my assistance."

"Dear lady, I would travel half around the world if it would be of any help to you. Your husband was the dearest friend I had on earth, and for his sake, as well as your own, I am glad to be of great or little service as the case may be, whenever and wherever you are.

"Besides," he added lightly, "in summoning me across here you have really done me a service; for when your cablegram came to me I had just made up my mind to take a much needed month's holiday, but did not know where in the world to go for it. Now, I have

come to England, where I shall spend a most enjoyable four weeks, with perhaps a run across to Paris."

"That makes me feel ever so much more comfortable," replied Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. "Now, let us look at those staterooms."

Letters of wonder, glad surprise and congratulation came pouring in from all sides. It added to the great joy, just to realize how many friends and well-wishers Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had. The Beckwith family wrote characteristically, each and every member volunteering to go home with Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and her party as escort. But this privilege Mr. Jack Beckwith claimed for himself, and insisted upon being informed as to the steamer on which they were to sail, that he might book his own passage accordingly.

"Letty, dear, it is hardly worth while writing such a length of detail to Emma Haines now," laughed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones one day, pointing to an exceedingly thick budget that lay on top of a heap of letters, addressed in Letty's hand to her friend at the Settlement House. "We shall be at home ourselves almost as soon as that letter can reach Emma, and

then you will have plenty of opportunities to talk it all over."

Letty laughed and pressed down more firmly a corner of the second postage stamp on her letter.

"I didn't just write that letter, Aunt Mary, that is, I didn't write it all at once," she explained. "But during those first few days when we all felt pretty sure about Violet and yet I might not tell any one the wonderful secret, why I just had to say things about it, somehow, so I began a journal, writing a page or two every now and then to say how pleased and excited and happy we all were.

"And as I've had so many letters to write and answer lately, that I hadn't time to tell Emma much in my letter to her, I just tore those pages out of my blank book, with a little note to say what they meant, and am sending them to her.

"You forget, Aunt Mary," she concluded with a grave air of responsibility, "that after we get home I shan't have very much time to talk over things with Emma. I shall be so very busy taking care of Violet."

"Bless your dear, motherly little heart!"

ejaculated Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, the tears filling her eyes, "what a comfort you are going to be to me, Letty mine," and she kissed her tenderly.

The days of preparation were few and much had to be done. Violet must have some proper clothes for traveling, and Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's first intention was to go directly to London to shop. But it was so evident that Violet dreaded going about in her crippled state, any more than was necessary, that the idea was abandoned at once.

"London sounds like such a dreadfully big place, with everybody always rushing about," she said, "I should be afraid some one would push against me and hurt my lame hip. Besides," she lowered her voice and added shyly, "I am afraid people would stare at me so, with my crutches."

So certain large shops were written to, and the most delightful packages began pouring into the sitting-room of the pink villa on the Parade; warm flannels and wrappers, pretty soft dresses and a charming long coat to wear on shipboard.

Violet sat all day in a state of bewildered

bliss, gazing at the succession of pretty, dainty things and trying to realize that they were all meant for her. She "tried on" until she grew too tired, then Letty, who was found to be of practically the same size except for an additional breadth of shoulder, fitted for her.

"Isn't it lucky that Violet and I are so near of a size, Aunt Mary?" she laughed. "It will be most convenient, I think, for now instead of having to fit two different people you'll only have to get double the number of the same things, and dress us like twins."

Which gay little speech set at rest a secret fear in Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's heart. She had been a wee bit afraid that Letty might feel left out, even a bit jealous, of this new-found sister.

"There is one thing I simply must do, Mr. Shoemaker," declared Mrs. Hartwell-Jones a day or two before their departure from Lyme Regis. "I must do something for Mr. and Mrs. Moore. Mrs. Moore comes here every day to visit with Violet, and I can see how terribly hard it is going to be to give her up. I hurt her feelings almost past forgiveness by offering to pay her for her care of Violet during all these years. I have found out that she

has a niece in service who is only too willing to give up and come to live with her aunt. I am to pay the niece's expenses here and a little something a month to make up for the wages she's giving up. In this way Mrs. Moore will have some one—I can't say to take Violet's place, but to be a companion during Mr. Moore's long absences.

"But I want to do some one special thing for them—some special treat to help get over the first pangs of loneliness, don't you know."

"I know what you could do," Violet spoke up unexpectedly. "Mother Moore (Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had suggested this mode of address, following the example of the French in addressing their foster mothers), Mother Moore has always wanted to see London."

"The very thing, my darling," exclaimed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones enthusiastically. "Let us arrange for a 'personally conducted' tour at once, Mr. Shoemaker, and when we present them with their tickets they can't possibly refuse."

So, after all, Mrs. Moore was not so very badly off, or would not be, when the first hard ache was assuaged.

"Instead of poor, helpless me to trot around and wait upon, Mother Moore," said Violet cheerfully, "you will have a grown-up companion to help you about the house and visit with you. Then I shall send you letters all the time and perhaps, who knows, some day you will come over to New York to visit me. We'll see. I am ready to believe that any wonder can happen now.

"And oh, Mother Moore," she added tremulously, "I may be cured! Just think of it! At any rate I shall be ever and ever so much better. Oh, doesn't that thought make my going easier for you to bear?"

And so the day of departure came and, almost before they knew it, the party were on board the big steamer homeward bound, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and her two daughters, as she kept repeating with almost hysterical joyousness to Mademoiselle La Grange, who was going with them as companion and helper. Mr. Shoemaker was on the dock to wave them off and he felt reconciled to not accompanying them when he saw Mr. Jack Beckwith's merry face and stalwart form beside them on the deck.

Mr. Jack made himself indispensable. He won Violet's heart at once by his gravely polite manner and twinkling eyes, and she would allow no one else to carry her up and down the companion stairs from her state-room to her deck chair and back.

"You are always getting things, little Miss Grey," said Mr. Jack to Letty. "I envy you. First you got Mrs. Hartwell-Jones, and now you have got a sister. How do you manage it?"

"Isn't it just unbelievably beautiful?" she responded earnestly, clasping her hands in the eager way it always amused him to see. "I know I am just the luckiest girl in the whole world!"

Mr. Jack regarded her soberly.

"You really are, Letty," he said seriously, "but not for exactly the reason you think. It is because you are blessed with a sunny disposition and the sort of soul that 'thinketh no evil.'"

Letty was delighted with this sincere praise, but she was puzzled too, and pondered long over his words.

Then again, almost before they knew it, to

quote Letty's words, they were all at home again—at home in the dear little house to which her beloved Aunt Mary had brought Letty less than a year ago. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had believed herself absolutely happy and contented then ; but now, what an added joy and blessing were hers !

CHAPTER XX

GETTING WELL

WHAT a home-coming that was, to be sure ! The flowers and notes of welcome of last year were nothing to compare with it. There was no hamper of good things from Sunnycrest, to be sure, but Bridget, cheerful and energetic after her summer holiday, served up a luncheon that equaled any birthday feast ever spread.

“I have only one regret,” declared Mr. Jack Beckwith, who had escorted them home from the steamer and had accepted with alacrity an invitation to remain for luncheon, “and that is that I could not arrange to have a brass band to play outside the window. I am sure we all feel like it.”

They had not been at home twenty-four hours before the great surgeon specialist paid them a visit. Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's mind could not rest until his verdict had been pronounced.

He came many times, asked many questions, and poor Violet, nervous and frightened, was obliged to submit to some very painful examinations. It was fortunate for every one that there was a great deal to do, unpacking, settling the house and receiving visitors ; for it diverted all their minds and relieved the suspense.

At last the great doctor declared himself convinced that an operation would prove successful and accordingly Mrs. Hartwell-Jones and Violet removed to a private hospital.

"Letty dear, I am leaving you in charge of the house," said Mrs. Hartwell-Jones at the end of a long, confidential talk in Letty's bedroom the night before they were to go. "I know that you will be contented and industrious and I feel that I am leaving the house to a competent little housekeeper."

"Indeed, Aunt Mary, I shall do my best. I am very proud to have you trust me so."

"You are sure you will not be lonely? You don't want mademoiselle to come and stay with you, or Emma Haines?"

"No, really and truly I don't, thanks. Mademoiselle is busy at school, I know, and it would be a nuisance to her to come back and

forth every day. And Emma Haines is working like a beaver to finish her shorthand course in time, for Mr. Goldberg will soon be ready for her. I shall have them to visit me often, and if I find myself getting scared or hearing bugaboos in the night, I'll tell you and then we can invite mademoiselle or some one to come and help scare them away."

"I have arranged for Katy to sleep in the little room at the end of the hall, you know, so she will always be within call. And Mr. Jack Beckwith has promised to keep an eye on you."

"Oh, I shall be so busy that the time will fly. You and Violet will be home again before I can turn around. I'll have the house-keeping to attend to every day," she recited importantly, "and such a lot to do to get ready for school. Then I'm coming up to the hospital for a visit every day, you know, and so every minute will be filled."

"You are a sweet, precious girlie, and have succeeded perfectly in your generous plan of setting my heart at rest, my little comfort!" exclaimed her Aunt Mary tenderly. "Oh, how blessed I am with my two precious daughters!"

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had watched Letty closely during all these busy days. In spite of having had her heart set at rest many times by the girl's happy face and contented chatter, yet the fear would creep out again and again that Letty felt herself set back into second place in her adopted mother's affections.

One of Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's letters had been from Monsieur Blanc, the distinguished French singing master who had heard Letty sing in London. He had heard of Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's good fortune, and wrote to congratulate her. At the end of the letter he had said with true French emotion: "Now that you have your own daughter to love and cherish, madame, perhaps it will be easier to let your other child, the little adopted one, follow the career that is so clearly marked out for her. Let me have her, my dear madame, I beseech you, and I assure you that one day she will have the world at her feet as one of its greatest singers. To my mind, madame, your finding of your lost daughter is a double blessing, for it will render easy to you the duty of giving Miss Letty over to the vocation that is hers by rights."

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones was pleased at the assumption of this great man that Letty's success as a singer was assured, but the tone of his letter hurt her.

"He need not write as if it would be easy for me to give Letty up," she reflected, "as if she were less important to me now, and that her place was filled. My precious, sweet hearted Letty, I shall always love her as tenderly as if my own precious baby had not been restored to me. Indeed, I can never forget that it was through Letty that I found her!"

It was some time before Emma Haines could accept Letty's invitation to come to spend the afternoon with her. Emma was working very hard indeed over her course in stenography. She was obliged to give every spare minute to her studies, for she still had her work to do at the Settlement House, and the qualifying for Mr. Goldberg's work had to be done after hours.

But by dint of close application and sitting up late for several nights, she felt that she was justified in taking an afternoon off, and hurried up-town. She was as anxious to talk

over everything as Letty herself, but it was natural that her own affairs should be uppermost in Emma's mind just now.

"Just think, Letty," she exclaimed the moment her things were off and the two girls were settled cozily in Letty's room, "I am to start with Mr. Goldberg on the first of October and he is to pay me thirty dollars a month. Think of my earning all that! And as fast as I improve and get more useful to him, he will raise my salary.

"I am to go on living at the Settlement House for a while, as it's so much cheaper, and I can do things there evenings to help pay my board, such as helping to pass refreshments on social evenings and sometimes lending a hand with the bookkeeping or mending. Mrs. Emlin says she thinks I'd better leave Tottie with Mrs. Andrews for this winter, anyway, and I'm willing, 'cause Tottie's happy there. Mrs. Andrews is real fond of her.

"And of course it's much cheaper to have Tottie stay there a while longer. If I can save some money right now at the start, it will make more to go on with when I begin taking care of her.

"But here I am, rattling on about my own affairs, and I guess you're just as crazy to talk about yours. You know I haven't really seen you, not to have a good talk, Letty, since you got back, after all your foreign travel. It hasn't changed you much," she added, surveying her friend keenly.

"I should think not!" replied Letty, laughing merrily. "You talk about my 'foreign travel' as if I'd been around the world, at the very least, whereas we hardly traveled at all."

In truth, the summer had changed Emma more than Letty. Always old for her age, she had become quite grown up under the responsibility of settling in life as a wage-earner.

"But although we did not travel much, when that wonderful thing happened I felt as if we had been away much longer than we were," continued Letty. "It was all just like a story book, Emma. It was the merest chance, you know, that took us to Lyme Regis, to begin with, then chance again that made me take lessons in making lace and admiring some pretty pieces Violet had made to

sell. Then mademoiselle and I went to see her, you know, because we felt sorry for her, and then—why, all the rest worked out like a story.”

“What is she like?” asked Emma who not seen Violet yet. “Is she pretty?”

“Awfully pretty, and now that we know who she is, we can see how very much she looks like Aunt Mary. Mademoiselle says that Violet reminded her of some one she knew, from the very first, and she could never think who it was. She kept going over in her mind all the different girls she knew to trace the likeness, but of course she never thought of Aunt Mary.”

“Violet’s rather a funny name. I never knew any one named Violet before. Is it what Mrs. Hartwell-Jones had named her when she had her—before she lost her?”

“No, Violet was christened Mary, after her mother. But she was too little to tell Mrs. Moore what her name was, when she was found, and so Mrs. Moore picked out a fancy name that she thought pretty and called her by it.

“And it really suits Violet in a way ; she is

so dainty and delicate looking, with sort of violet lights in her eyes, and so we are going to call her Violet 'for short.' "

"Violet isn't any shorter than Mary—it's longer," commented Emma, who was a very literal person. "How does Mrs. Hartwell-Jones take it?"

"Oh, Emma, it's blissful to see her. Aunt Mary has grown years and years younger, and that's only fair, when you come to think of it, for it was losing Violet in the beginning that made her get white haired and old."

Emma gave her a shrewd little glance.

"As things have turned out, it's kind of lucky you call her 'Aunt Mary' instead of 'mother,' ain't it?" she commented.

"What do you mean by 'as things have turned out'? It was still rather soon after my own mother's death when I went to Aunt Mary, and I found that way of speaking easier."

"Well, it's certainly easier than havin' to change."

"Why should I have had to change?"

"Oh, come now, Letty, don't pretend you don't understand. You don't think Mrs. Hart-

well-Jones'd want you to go on calling her 'mother' after she'd got her own daughter back? It might seem to Violet like you'd taken her place. Instead of that it's your nose that is out of joint," she added a little maliciously.

Letty looked puzzled and a trifle hurt.

"What can you mean by saying my nose is out of joint, Emma?" she demanded straightforwardly.

Emma laughed and looked a little sheepish.

"Why, I only thought perhaps you might be feeling a little left out in the cold," she answered evasively.

"Nonsense," replied Letty sharply. "Violet and I are like twin sisters. As if I could be mean and selfish enough to be jealous of Aunt Mary's finding her dear, dear baby again, that she had grieved for so long! I am as happy as happy can be, Emma Haines."

Letty was hurt as well as indignant, by her friend's misunderstanding. But just then Katy brought in a tray with hot chocolate and small cakes, and the situation, which had threatened to become awkward, was relieved.

Emma turned the conversation again to her own affairs and Letty listened with as much

interest as she could summon. The topic lasted until Emma's departure, but after she had gone Letty did not go at once to her practicing, as she had intended to do. Instead, she sat down on a chair in front of the drawing-room fire and, leaning her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands, fell into a brown study.

Mr. Jack Beckwith found her thus when he stopped in, half an hour later, to see how she was getting on.

"Not such good news from the hospital?" he asked anxiously, surveying her grave face.

"Oh, the best," she answered reassuringly, and brightening a little under his kindly manner. "But I was—well, just a little bit worried about something."

"Will you tell me what it is? Perhaps I can help, in the absence of Aunt Mary," he suggested.

"I should like very much to talk it over with you," Letty replied frankly, "for it is something I shouldn't care to speak about to Aunt Mary."

"Dear me, this sounds serious. Fire away, little Miss Grey."

“Emma Haines has just been here, and she seemed to think—well, she seemed to think—it is hard to tell it without saying too much, Mr. Jack. She took such a queer attitude about what has happened; about our finding Violet, you know.

“Emma seemed to think that—that possibly Aunt Mary would not want me any longer. Of course I know that is silly, Mr. Jack, but—but I couldn't help thinking about it a little.”

“Of course you could not help it. Hateful speeches, however untrue, always penetrate. But, Letty dear, of course you know that Mrs. Hartwell-Jones feels nothing of the sort. She feels, just as you do, that her joy in life has been doubled.

“But, Letty, there is another side to the question. There is the future. You are to begin singing lessons this fall, and if all goes well, more study and broader experience will be necessary. Now, if you had continued to be Mrs. Hartwell-Jones's only charge, she would have found it hard to give you up, when the time came to send you away to study; not so much because of her love for you,

for love means self-sacrifice, but from sheer loneliness and inability to do without you.

"You, in your turn, would have been hampered by anxiety for her happiness and welfare, and, if you had consented to leave her at all, you would have given but a divided attention to work which, to succeed, must be entered upon with all one's heart and soul. Whereas now, when the time comes, Violet will be here to keep her mother from missing you too much."

"Of course, and when I do go away to study, as I surely hope to, some day, although I shall suffer perfect torments of homesickness, I shall know that precious Aunt Mary is happy. And as for the present, Mr. Jack, it would be flat disloyalty to Aunt Mary to imagine even for a moment that she hasn't got a heart big enough to hold both her daughters! I shall make Emma Haines see it that way—and any one else who may have thought as Emma did," she added with proud defiance.

Mr. Jack Beckwith rose and clasped both her hands.

"Good for you, my sensible, loyal little

Miss Grey. Your Aunt Mary is indeed blessed to have you for a champion. Any one who wins your love is lucky. So, three cheers for the future and 'Letty's Career.' "

Bowing gravely, he left Letty to the fire and her own thoughts.

CHAPTER XXI

CONCLUSION

THE days and weeks flitted busily, happily by. Violet's recovery was assured, almost from the beginning. And why should she not get well with so much to help her?

The days at the hospital, herself and her mother alone together, were a great blessing, for the long separated mother and daughter drew very close to each other. "They were busy getting acquainted," as Letty expressed it to Mrs. Somers.

Each revealed to the other all her thoughts and feelings, the sadnesses and lonelinesses of the past, and the hopes and blessings of the future. Violet soon learned that there was nothing at all to fear, but everything to love and adore in this very charming mother of hers. She told, laughingly now, the shyness all gone, of her terror and timidity during those first days at Lyme Regis, and how Letty had helped her to overcome her fears by act-

ing out a story, in which Violet was to pretend that the really new-found mother was the heroine of a wonderful tale.

"How like Letty that is!" exclaimed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones. "Always making a story out of everything, and always a happy story. I have never known any one with such a happy disposition as Letty."

"It was what she told me about herself, mother, that helped more than anything to keep me from being afraid of you. It does seem silly now, when I think that I was ever afraid of you, but I was. You seemed so wonderful and so—so far away from me, that I was scared most to death. But Letty didn't laugh at me. She understood and helped me. Oh, I am so glad I have her for a sister!"

"Which is just what Letty says about you," replied her mother, beaming.

Dr. Heinrich thought it wiser to have Violet stay at the hospital for longer than at first had been planned; not because of any complications but just because she was getting well so rapidly and steadily that he preferred not to risk an interruption of her progress by a move.

Letty was so serene and happy at home, so busy with her lessons and her friends, and reported being so well taken care of by Bridget and Katy that Mrs. Hartwell-Jones felt no misgiving about leaving her. Moreover, Letty had begun her singing lessons with Madame Henri and was quite absorbed in her work. October slipped by, and Letty experienced only one little secret regret in the midst of her happy, contented life. She believed that her birthday had been forgotten.

"Not that I care," she told herself many times a day. "I had such a wonderful time on my last birthday, and so many presents, that it was enough to last over two or even three birthdays!"

She did not realize that the very fact of her birthday having been given such special attention the year before, made it harder to bear the overlooking this time. But she kept all thoughts on this subject very carefully to herself, and never so much as hinted at the coming event.

The birthday fell on a Monday, and on Sunday afternoon preceding she went as usual to the hospital. By special permission

of the superintendent, Letty was allowed to remain at the hospital on Sunday evening for tea, and in return for this kindness she sang hymns afterward in the convalescent ward; concerts thoroughly enjoyed by both performer and audience.

“These evenings with you and Violet are so nice,” she exclaimed. “Sunday evening is the only time in the whole week that I ever get a bit lonely. All the school evenings are filled up with studying and practicing, and Saturday evening there is generally something going on—the Settlement entertainments or a party at the Beckwiths’. You will love parties at the Beckwiths’, Violet. But Sunday is different. Sunday evenings were meant to be spent with one’s own family, I think.”

On this particular Sunday evening—or afternoon rather—Letty was feeling pensive. She told herself that it was because she was going to be fifteen years old to-morrow and was growing old. She would not admit that she felt sorry because she believed that no one else remembered that to-morrow she would be fifteen.

Violet was permitted to walk a little around her own room—it seemed an unbelievable thing that she actually could walk without the worn little old crutch—and she hurried to the door to meet Letty, as soon as the brisk, familiar steps were heard in the corridor. She almost ran, so eager was she to see Letty.

But nothing was said except the usual exchange of greetings, until the three were gathered cozily around the open fire. Letty's cheeks were flushed by her quick walk through the keen autumn air, and her pretty brown hair was wind-tossed. She made a delightful picture of health and happiness as she bent over the bunch of bright crimson and yellow leaves she had gathered on her way. Violet bent over the leaves too, with eagerness. They seemed to bring the out-of-doors to her, to help her to realize that before very long she too could wander in the park and gather its spoils. As Mrs. Hartwell-Jones watched the two absorbed faces, her heart grew big with love and gratitude that she should be thus doubly blessed.

“How pretty they look together,” she thought. “Soon my Violet's face will be as

plump and rosy as Letty's," she reflected hopefully.

"Letty dear," she said aloud, "do you remember what we were doing this time last year?"

Letty looked up quickly and her cheeks flushed with embarrassment. It was almost as if Aunt Mary had read her secret thought.

"Yes, indeed I do," she answered promptly. "We were on our dear, dear motor trip. That motor trip was a reward for bad conduct," she added merrily, turning to Violet. "I went roller-skating in the park without Aunt Mary's permission, and very deservedly got tumbled over and broke my wrist. So, when I was suffering from remorse and the wrist, Mr. Jack Beckwith rewarded me by taking us all on a most perfect motor trip. That is a way Mr. Jack Beckwith has, Violet, he rewards failures, as you'll find out for yourself—or no, I don't believe you ever will find out for yourself because you are too good ever to be naughty and too brave ever to fail."

"Oh, Letty, don't praise me so highly! I truly don't deserve it, and shall never be able to live up to it," ejaculated Violet, half laugh-

ing and half crying, for she was still in a highly nervous state from the suffering and suspense she had been through.

"So you will have to take my word for it," went on Letty gaily. "And I sometimes think that his way is the best way of all, perhaps, for it makes the wrong-doer lots sorer and more repentant than any amount of punishment could do, and not nearly so apt to forget and do it again."

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones was surprised and touched by this bit of wisdom. She listened thoughtfully and tucked it away in the back of her brain to make use of some time in a personal trial. Then she returned to the subject in hand.

"But it was something more than just the motor trip," she persisted gently.

"It was your birthday," broke in Violet excitedly, unable to keep the secret another moment. "Mother told me all about it, and she said we might celebrate on Sunday again this year, because of your being here with us all evening."

In the excitement and pleasure of gift-giving that followed, there was no chance for

Letty to express the joy and thankfulness she felt more than by the few broken words :

“ You remembered ! Oh, you remembered ! ”

But Mrs. Hartwell-Jones understood and was glad that she had not put off the celebration until the morrow—the real date.

Supper hour was early at the hospital and Letty had scarcely recovered from the surprise and joy of her gifts—a dainty set of chinchilla furs from her Aunt Mary and an exquisite bit of Honiton lace from Violet—when a knock on the door was followed by the entrance of a maid to set the table. The meal was very simple but oh, so merry ! Many a sad face in the women's ward, around the corner of the long, bare corridor, brightened at sound of the peals of girlish laughter. And there was ice-cream to top off with, ordered in specially, and a beautifully decorated birthday cake, the counterpart of last year's, only larger, and crowned with fifteen pink candles instead of fourteen.

“ Just think what a great girl you are growing to be, Letty mine ! ” sighed Mrs. Hartwell-Jones a bit wistfully.

"It doesn't seem possible that it's really a whole year since my last birthday," agreed Letty, "but I suppose that is because I've been so awfully happy."

"There's a ring and a sixpence and a thimble in the cake," put in Violet eagerly. "And mother says we may send slices of it to the convalescents so that they may have the fun of looking for the ring and things."

"Oh, how nice, dear Aunt Mary, to think of anything so kind. May I carry the pieces of cake to them myself?"

"Yes, dear child, but you two girls must have your slices first, and the nurse."

"And you, too, Aunt Mary. Oh, dear, I do hope we won't get any of the things," she added, lifting the knife. "Do you remember how Mr. Jack got the ring last year and gave it to me?"

As if her mention of his name had invoked that young gentleman's presence, there was a knock on the door and a maid entered, bearing Mr. Jack Beckwith's card and the request that he might be allowed to come up for a moment.

"Aha, I guessed as much!" he ejaculated as he paused in the doorway and surveyed

the gay little party. "Am I in time for the 'party'? Mercy me, isn't that a pretty big cake for three ladies?"

"There is still some ice-cream left, and you may have a slice of cake if you will promise not to choose the slice with the ring in it," replied Letty merrily.

Then she explained the reason of the cake's being so large, and Mr. Jack asked permission to help carry plates of it to the convalescent ward.

There was great merriment over the hunting of the hidden prizes. A pale, tired-eyed little seamstress got the ring, and blushed like a girl. A hearty, jolly washwoman, twice married and the mother of six, got the thimble and the ward nurse herself the sixpence.

When it was over and details of the findings reported to Violet, they all settled themselves again around the fire for a comfortable talk. Letty displayed her gifts for Mr. Jack's admiration and then he, rather diffidently for one usually so sure of himself, drew a small package from his pocket and said, more to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones than to Letty:

"I don't know whether I shall be allowed

to present it, but it seemed so absolutely the most appropriate thing that I couldn't resist trying. I happened to see it in passing a jeweler's window and it called out to me: 'Stop, look and listen; whom do I remind you of?' I did stop and exclaimed at once: 'Letty! You certainly should be a part of Letty Grey!' So I went in and bought it, and there you are."

By this time the girls, giggling over his explanation, had between them got the little package unwrapped. Letty pressed the fastening of a tiny leather case and displayed, resting upon a white velvet cushion, a most exquisite little opal ring, surrounded by tiny brilliants. Letty could not speak in her astonishment and rapture, but Mrs. Hartwell-Jones shook her head at Mr. Beckwith.

"It is her birth stone," he pleaded meekly. "And she is fifteen. But if you will let her keep it 'for luck' she needn't wear it for a few years."

And so it was settled, for few could resist Mr. Jack Beckwith when he had set his heart upon being allowed to do anything, whereupon he took a hurried leave, to get home in

time for late dinner, he said, but in reality to escape Letty's overwhelming thanks.

It was this little unexpected birthday celebration that gave Letty her idea for the getting well party, as she called it. She explained her idea to Mrs. Hartwell-Jones one afternoon when they had left Violet to her massage and gone shopping together.

"I'd like to have a real evening party, Aunt Mary, to welcome Violet home, and to invite all our special friends. Then Violet can get acquainted with them all at once. It is lots easier to get acquainted with people at a party because then every one is laughing and talking and having good times and you don't have a chance to feel shy or strange. May I have it?"

"But how can you manage without me at home to help you?"

"I can do it all by myself, truly, invitations, supper and all. Bridget and I have already talked over the supper and Katy has settled which rooms people are to leave their wraps in. And her sister is going to take her evening off to come help open the door and wait on people."

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones laughed.

"You seem to have got everything ready. Have you sent out the invitations yet?"

"Of course not, Aunt Mary. I just wanted to be sure it could be done, and that Bridget and Katy would be willing to help, before I asked you. But I know just what to say in the invitations, and how to receive the people when they come," she added artfully. "Here is my list."

She produced a sheet of paper and a lead pencil.

"The pencil is to add other names if you think of any one I have left out—or to cross out any you wish," she added slowly.

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones smiled doubtfully as she cast a hurried glance over the paper.

"Grandfather and Grandmother Baker and the twins," she read. "You evidently are not going to have an age limit to your party."

"Oh, no, I said it wasn't going to be a usual kind of party, but all the people I love best and who have been kind to me; so Violet can get to know them. I hope the whole Beckwith family will come, even Mrs. Somers' children if she will let them sit up

late for a treat. They can have ice-cream and lady-fingers and go home at nine o'clock."

Mrs. Hartwell-Jones caught sight on the list of the names of Mr. and Mrs. Goldberg and Mr. and Mrs. Drake.

"I will look over the list and tell you what I think of it to-morrow," she said gravely, folding the paper and putting it in her shopping bag.

"Well, if you approve, may we have the party during the Thanksgiving holidays? Just think, Aunt Mary, Violet doesn't know what Thanksgiving is for. I am sure she will want to celebrate it in thankfulness for her own good luck, and I'd like to introduce her to all the friends who have done so much for me and been so kind to me—all of them, dear Aunt Mary—so that she may know how much I have to be thankful for," finished Letty soberly.

In view of this explanation of the matter, Mrs. Hartwell-Jones allowed the list to go out just as it stood and Letty was plunged into the delightful and absorbing interest of getting ready for the party.

"We must have it a nice, quiet party, be-

cause of course Violet can't move about much yet," she said to Mary Beckwith, who was helping her with the arrangements. "What games can you suggest?"

"Well," replied Mary, after a little consideration, "suppose we divide the party in two. The little ones can have a donkey party in one room while all the rest are guessing at a 'book party' in another. You know what a book party is? A lot of objects or pictures got up to represent books, and each person has a pencil and paper to write down their guesses. It is lots of fun, but my, what a lot of pencils you will have to sharpen, Letty, if everybody comes."

And everybody did come. It was quite a remarkable gathering and as Letty stood in the doorway between the two rooms looking at the guests, and realized that each was present because he or she was Letty's own special friend, she felt that she had as much to be thankful for as Violet herself.

Mr. and Mrs. Drake, who happened to be in winter quarters in Jersey City, came after a good deal of urging. They kept bashfully

in the background, but in their way enjoyed the party almost more than any one; enjoyed particularly the honor of being invited with such great people. For Mrs. Somers and the Beckwith family rather awed them, Madame Henri they knew to be a celebrity and they were quite overwhelmed by the arrival of Lady Anvers. For Lady Anvers had come to America a little earlier than she had expected and insisted upon being included in the Thanksgiving party.

"And I am so glad, Aunt Mary," Letty had said when she received Lady Anvers' note, "because really, she was one of my 'first-est friends.'"

Mr. and Mrs. Goldberg, on the other hand, were quite in their element. The stud in Mr. Goldberg's glacé-starched bosom shone opulently, and Mrs. Goldberg had quite outdone herself in gorgeousness.

Even Grandfather and Grandmother Baker were there, for they had come down to the city to spend Thanksgiving with their son, daughter-in-law and the twins. The twins were very much in evidence, and Christopher and Seth Beckwith performed all the wonder-

ful handsprings they had learned for the charity bazaar the year before.

To crown the event, Grandmother Baker had had a hamper of goodies baked by Huldah and sent down from Sunnycrest Farm, and it really seemed too bad that Huldah herself could not be there to help serve them and see how her handiwork was appreciated. Christopher was heard to confide to Seth Beckwith that for once in his life he was unable to take even a first helping of everything provided.

Violet looked on with eager, excited eyes. All of Letty's friends showed their best side to the gentle, fragile girl, and she hoped ardently that some day she, too, would be able to boast of an equal number of friends.

"I wonder if I can learn to make people like me," she thought. "It is a gift and Letty has it. I shall try. People are so fond of my dear mother that perhaps they will love me for her sake."

"Oh, Aunt Mary," whispered Letty, as they stood side by side to shake hands with the reluctantly departing guests, "don't you think it has been a success? Everybody had

a good time, didn't they, even if they weren't—well, all just the same sort of people."

"They did indeed, little girl, and the reason is because they were drawn together by love. That is the secret of life, my child, love; and you are blessed to have learned it so young."

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